



Eze, France

The Full Truth About Half Formed Thoughts

Sometimes it is easy to recognize...Sometimes you don't realize it's happening until it's over. You are working with your team/systems and a thought half forms in the back of your head.

Now the thought could be tied to a problem ("that looks off..."). Perhaps your thought relates to an opportunity ("I wonder if we could..."). But the thought isn't fully formed. It sits there as a bookmark in your mind, slowly fading to a nagging itch in your list of things to do.

Most of us let the thought drift off to be forgotten. Some of us 'look into it' in time, trying to determine whether it's a good idea or just a random thought. Very few of us stop and assign value to these subliminal musings.

It actually can be very hard to assign meaning or value when you don't yet have all of the nouns and verbs. You don't have information sufficient to outline the idea. You don't have time to understand what you are seeing. Possibly, you cannot fully remember the thought you had in that moment some time ago.

So, if that malformed mental misfire isn't becoming reality, what is it doing? It could be causing some confusion as it reappears at odd times. It could be causing stress as it nags you to deal with it but you

don't have the time or understanding to do so. It could be blocking the way for a new idea to form in that corner in the back of your mind. Or it could be costing your company money. Busy little thing, isn't it?

So what can you do? Beats me. But let me tell you what I do.

First, I give it voice. I speak what few words I have out loud (to myself). I add words and direction and assign questions to it. I give it life for just a few minutes and allow it to capture my imagination. Maybe it's only 5 minutes but if the idea can excite me in that short time, it's worth exploring further. If not, it's cleared from my mind (and my list of things to do), and I can move on.

Now it does make me look foolish if I'm not alone when I start talking to my little stray thought. But I would look even more foolish voicing my thoughts to my coworkers without knowing even whether I was thinking of something new or a repair. The last thing anyone can afford to do is to lose credibility with IT or Engineering while you work through the mental gyrations of fleshing out a thought. But should a grand idea be cut short because I am worried about looking stupid in front of others? Never.

Second, I make a decision. This now exciting, half-formed idea needs a caretaker. It needs to be placed on a to-do list with someone who will care for it, research it, and take it to the next stage. Maybe that's me, maybe not. The idea excited me so it's worthwhile but it deserves being looked into by someone with sufficient information, knowledge, experience, and caring to give it a chance to survive on its own. So I find that some ideas need to be handed to experts in other areas to thrive. Here's the tricky part – This means sharing the idea and no longer fearing if it sounds unfinished or dumb.

You know what I mean. I've spent weeks stumbling over thoughts, ruining plans, stressing over the unknown, and generally wasting time because I wasn't willing to let go. Once I handed the thought, small and unformed, over to another, it started to grow and take direction. As a matter of fact, when I was working on my new company's logo, I had just a big mess with only failure tied to it when I handed it off to the designer. She promptly asked how my logo should make me feel about my company. That was an approach I could not have envisioned to save my life, but it worked. I hired an expert and my corny little idea is now a beautiful vision.

Once you get your thought given back to you with all the research and options laid out in sensible order, you know what to do with it. You make it happen. It's still your stray thought but now it has form and function, savings and opportunity; it has a chance.

Bottom line, take action. That thought may be a financial coup. That idea may stop a bad situation months before you have a crisis on your hands. Even the fully verbalized question in the right ear could lead to a project that will make you proud.



Sally Baptiste is Co-Founder of Payment Operations Group a consultancy of Payment Professionals who love to make things real. If you would like to bounce some ideas around, we'd love to talk.