

QUARTERLY OF THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA WINTER 2017

INNOVATION

Design at the Margins

COLLABORATION ■ GEOMETRY ■ IMPOSSIBLE DREAMER





HAL yeah!

Jibo, the first social robot for the home now shipping!
IDEA Award Recipient. Fast Company Innovation By Design
Recipient. Core77 Design Awards Winner. TIME Magazine
Innovation Of the Year Cover-boy. Designed by Huge Design.

QUARTERLY OF THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA **WINTER 2017**

INNOVATION®



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Cover: Change Starts with Me and You. IDEA 2017 Gold-winning Dream Ring. See p. 39.

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By Joon Kwon

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Joon Kwon is a creative director at Havas Korea. He has experience managing campaigns of such global brands as BMW, Heineken, LG and many others. He previously worked at GREY Worldwide and Geometry Global. Kwon is dedicated to the team at IDEAfree, where he works on social impact product designs. He has won many design awards, including IDEA and iF.

CHANGE STARTS WITH ME AND YOU

The “Miracle of Han River” is the term that describes South Korea’s magnificent economic growth since the 1950s. At the end of the 1950s, right after the Korean War, South Korea’s GDP was only \$45. The country suffered from many social issues including war, poverty, sexism and a lack of education. It was truly a dark age. People were starving. Children were fed one piece of bread a day by the school. Because of poverty and the preference for sons, education was a privilege only the first son received. But Koreans overcame these adversities and produced the Miracle of Han River.

In 2017, everything is different. All children have the right to be educated. Through education, women’s social status has risen. Korea even elected its first female president in 2012.

In Korea there are generations who experienced war and those who did not. The younger generations have witnessed the generations before us achieve rapid economic growth and how they overcame the dark era. So we understand what developing countries experience. We know that hard work needs to be done to make things better. At IDEAfree, we want to help those in need create their own miracle, but faster, with help. We design solutions that will transform people and communities.

IDEAfree is a group of people gathered from an advertising agency. All the members of IDEAfree believe that we should give our best to our profession but also to the society we live in. We have pledged to spend 80 percent of our talent on business and 20 percent on society. Using our many experiences in managing global brand campaigns, at IDEAfree we see and solve global social impact problems.

Walking Along, Not Ahead

Working in the advertising industry requires an ability to constantly think of refreshing, trendy, creative ideas. The world requires that we keep moving forward, stay one step ahead of everyone else and lead the trend. However, at IDEAfree we chose to walk along, not ahead. **When we**



work on social impact design, we do not try to charm the idea with advanced skills. What’s important is to understand the difficulties people face. One idea has the power to change a life and a society. We want our ideas to be catalysts that start a reaction.



People require certain things to survive. There are so many different problems in so many communities around the world. We use our experience as advertising experts to observe the diversity in the problems. In the advertising industry, ideas are no longer restricted to the frame of conventional media. It covers all sorts of areas such as digital, architecture, experiential design, etc. It's common to find solutions from unexpected places and times. So we are open to different possibilities even if we are unfamiliar with them because we are trained to adapt.

Although the world is full of problems, we can't always easily tell if the problems are urgent. That's because we are so used to living in a world where problems are justified. We have to keep asking ourselves, "Why?" We have to keep our eyes open and look for the problems we missed because we've gotten so used to them. Even if a problem feels insignificant, it may be vital for someone's survival. By seeing familiar things from a different perspective, we can better see the problems.

There are a few things to consider when we talk about social impact ideas. Is it cheap? Is it sustainable? Is it commercially valuable? Is it appealing to the people it is designed to serve? These add up to the question, Is the solution appropriate for the end users' living environment? The key is to let the solution be naturally soaked into the recipients' lives: technology reinterpreted in their way and a solution people can easily apply. We don't necessarily have to use fancy technology to do so.

In business, ideas are usually kept secret until their debut; the commercial value of an idea plummets as soon

SUNCUBATOR

PROBLEM

Day and night temperature difference in Africa is extreme. Temperature can go up to 45°C during daytime and down to 10°C during nighttime. Children, especially newborns are weak at regulating body temperature. Therefore, daily temperature difference can become extremely dangerous, possibly leading to hypothermia and if severe, even death. Most importantly, low body temperature can decrease immune system. According to research, 1°C drop in body temperature leads to 50% decrease in immune system. African children are already exposed to fatal diseases such as malaria and constant diarrhea. To them, weak immune system is especially life-threatening. Even now, millions of children are dying from hypothermia and diseases worsened by low body temperature. **SUNCUBATOR is now here to rescue African babies.**

IDEA

The solar-powered thermal bed keeps newborn infant warm overnight. Heat preservation material, filled in the thermal bed stores solar heat during daytime. This thermal bed keeps infant safe during the night, providing warmth like mother's body temperature. It is also sustainable using solar energy.

STORES SOLAR HEAT DURING DAYTIME **KEEPS WARM DURING NIGHTTIME**

ICM DESIGN AWARD 2017 iF DESIGN AWARD 2017 K-DESIGN AWARD 16 WINNER

as it is revealed in public. But we treat ideas a little differently. Our social impact ideas are designed of the society and for the society. So opening up and sharing our ideas is a very exciting thing to do. **We believe that the ideas become more compelling when we gather feedback from the process of revealing and sharing our work.**

By revealing our ideas, we are given an opportunity to address weak points seen from a different perspective. As part of this process, we enter many award programs to meet experts from diverse areas. A competition is a place where we can share and circulate our ideas. Some people will have useful comments on our design. Others could be inspired by the idea and design something completely new. We believe that sharing our ideas in a way that they can be viewed from

SUNcubator (left) was a IDEA 2016 Gold winner and Dream Ring (below) was a IDEA 2017 Gold winner, as well as the 2017 Curator's Choice.



several different perspectives is the ideal condition for ideas to develop. As we share our thoughts and ideas, the possibility of making communities better is increased. Two of our projects, the SUNcubator and Dream Ring, became more solid as a result of entering them in design competitions, and they scored good results as well.

Ideas for the World

Africa is well-known for its hot weather, but it is actually a region where the temperature range is huge. Through researching articles, we discovered that Africa becomes a fatal environment for babies when the temperature drops under 10 degrees Celsius at night. Doctors say that babies' immune systems are 30 percent less effective when their body temperature drops by 1 degree. That means that if we can prevent that 1-degree drop, we can boost their immune system. We wanted to help babies have the strength to fight diseases themselves naturally.

The SUNcubator's goal was to strengthen babies' immune systems by keeping them warm at night. Our idea was to capture the heat of the sun and store it until night. To do so, we combined two different products, a heat pack and a baby bed. The SUNcubator was designed for the poorest, those who couldn't even afford a blanket. Therefore, it was made with economical and sustainable materials. And it was designed to last for generations. IDEAfree prefers ideas that are simple and easy, not complicated.

Dream Ring started off as a solution for sexism in Africa. Many African women suffer from sexism. Before examining the problem in Africa, we looked at a case that happened

quite near us. Until recently, South Korean women were frequently the target of sexism. But now women are regaining their right to be respected. We realized that women's education is the key to solving sexism. When women were given the same amount of education as men, women started to be empowered to fight for equality.

However, African women are far from receiving enough education. We found out that the cause was menstruation. Menstruation is considered dirty, and a lack of sanitary pads keeps girls out of school. We decided to make an affordable sanitary product for African women that is also perfectly safe and easy to use. We wanted a product that would stop girls from quitting school because of menstruation.

The Dream Ring is a substitute for rags, fabrics or even the mud that African women use as sanitary pads. When designing the Dream Ring, the main points we considered were price and sanitation. The Dream Ring is sustainable and disposable at the same time, which immensely increases price competitiveness and sanitation. Using a silicone ring and sugarcane vinyl made that possible. The Dream Ring can be a solution for not only Africa but also all over the world since sanitary products are a necessity for all women.

The Road Ahead

IDEAfree is continuously working hard to make a social impact. We are planning to manufacture and distribute the SUNcubator and Dream Ring. We are continuing to strengthen our designs.

In our work with global advertising agencies and managing global brand campaigns, getting funding for a project was not difficult; clients invest in great ideas. However, we are experiencing a difficult time trying to find funding for our social impact ideas. We received a lot of interest after winning a number of awards, but attempts to produce the products dissipated every time. This is an unexpected, challenging wall that we must break to walk forward. But we believe we will overcome this as well.

We hope to challenge and try out more with colleagues who share our ideals, and partners who value our works and support us. We are looking forward to the day when the SUNcubator keeps babies warm and healthy and the Dream Ring is used as a feminine hygiene product for women in Africa.

We all are global citizens. We contribute to society by doing what we can do best. If you invest 20 percent of your talent, the world can change. We strongly encourage you to join us in creating a better, more equal world. ■



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