

➔ remain comfortable in terms of overall living standards, the wider picture of lost income from job losses, pay freezes, and loss of overtime or bonuses has been keenly felt psychologically," says Kioriel. Put simply, thrift sells. "Many middle-class consumers are buying more own-label groceries and using online price comparison sites to stretch their incomes." Harness this with ideas that strip away gimmicky and marketing spiel, empowering people to make their money count.

TREND #2 THE CYNIC CRUNCH

"Consumers are also on to brands playing their emotions for profit," says Possioff. "In the wake of the financial debacle people aren't buying hollow bank ads claiming 'we're all in this together' and this applies across industry sectors." As a new, small player rather than an established business, you will be well-placed to benefit from this, so look to your ideas and services that place you firmly on the 'us' side of the 'us and them' equation.

TREND #3 RETAIL ESCAPISM

Although 'new thrift' is eminently exploitable, you shouldn't underestimate the desire to spend in reaction to the financial gloom. A desire for 'escapism' is set to become a major trend, according to Richard Cope, director of Foresight at Mintel research. "There's been a huge amount of economising, but we predict consumers will start breaking free from the 'tyranny of value'." These trends may at first seem totally contradictory, but the two actually complement each other. **While thrift will be a constant consumer driver, the desire for self-reward and distraction after the hard economic slog will burn more brightly.** Consumers may be looking to save pennies on their grocery shopping, but if you can come up with the right kind of luxury, that both rewards and distracts, they're ready to blow their pounds on it.

The surge in 3D media – in cinemas and soon home TV – is a clear sign that getting away from reality is becoming a driver, Cope argues. The numbers look promising: An estimated 13.6m 3D TV sets will be in European homes by 2013, according to Screen Digest. Sky are 3D-ing Premier League games, and BTX will be filming 25 games in 3D this summer for a post-event film. This burgeoning new 3D world will offer a huge range of opportunities for you. Maybe you could corner the market in renting 3D glasses by the match in pubs, or be the man to bring 3D-compatible designer frames to market for the style-conscious reality escapee? Think lucidly, act quickly on your ideas and don't underestimate the spending power of fun.

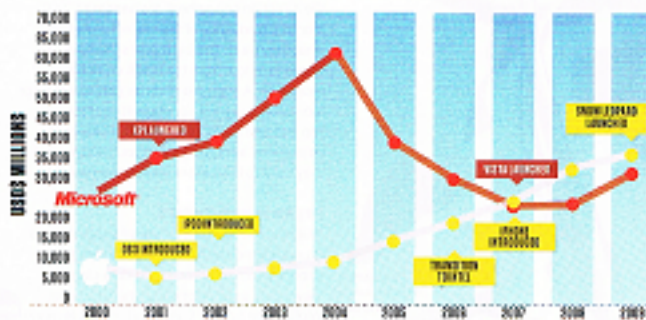
TREND #4 ETHICOMOMICS

The desire to 'go green' reached its zenith in 2007 during the boom years. It's since waned with costs deterring many, but ethics will be a big deal in the future, Cope argues. "Environmental and ethical issues still attract attention; nearly half of UK adults view them as important, and consumers will want ethical responsibility to be a chief concern," says Cope.

A host of products of ready-to-go into this. There's the iPhone app that uses your GPS to calculate the carbon footprint of your day's travel (Clear Standards), and another (Ecoris) that calculates what you need to do to offset it. In a neatly cynical twist, car insurer More Than's 'Green Wheels' policy assesses your driving style and then advises altering it to use less petrol. Provide a guilt-proof way to improve someone's bank balance while improving your own and you can't go wrong. So whether it's a website that logs all your purchases and automatically carbon-neutralises them with altruistic planting, or a new exercise bike that converts your hard work into voltage, there's cash in conscience if you work out how to make it pay.

THE TRAJECTORY OF GENIUS... AND MISJUDGEMENT

How ideas drive profits – up and down – for the big boys



STAGE 2 The Idea Generator

WHAT TO DO
Pinpoint
your idea

If your lightbulb isn't shining, don't panic; your idea doesn't have to be ingeniously original. Rather than reinvent the wheel, you could simply re-spin it by rehashing or 'monetarising' an existing idea.

IDEA SOURCE 1: YOUR NEEDS

"The golden rule," says Stephen Abela of Charles River Development, who develop software solutions for investment firms, "is to create a service or product that you want." Paul Dias, creator of the top-selling 'Tube Charger' iPhone app agrees: "Start with something you would want, then ask yourself, 'are there plenty of others who think the same?'"

IDEA SOURCE 2: EXPANDING WHAT YOU ALREADY DO

Dorset-based dentist and entrepreneur Dr Grant McAree expanded his business from teeth to an array of cosmetic procedures. "A dental surgery is a natural location for all manner of cosmetic surgery – so I thought 'why not go beyond teeth?'" says McAree. His decision illustrates how your money-spinning idea can come from taking a long hard look at how the resources you've already got can open new markets.

IDEA SOURCE 3:

WASTED RESOURCES

A bright spark at deskpacegenie.co.uk noted that most offices regularly have a spare desk or two. The site now offers that resource to self-employed people who need an office for admin purposes. They rent spare desks across the UK for an average of £170 per month. Be alert to wasted capacity whenever you go – if there's some potential, think laterally about who you could sell it to.