

This week's riff: I once read an interview with a tightrope walker who said that it's not the first step of the walk that is the most important; it's the second. That is the real point of full commitment and no return.

It's the same with the development of new business ideas. Your first prototype isn't the solution; it's just an initial step on the tightrope walk to a successful launch. James Dyson, for example, famously developed over 5,000 prototypes of his new bagless vacuum cleaner before finding a commercially robust version. And yet when companies develop trials and prototypes for new products and services they can put so much effort into Version #1 that they have no energy or resources to follow up with Versions #2, #3, #4 or beyond.

Earlier this week, for instance, I visited a retail client's new trial store. The team had spent several months planning and delivering the new concept, and while there were some clear successes, it was equally evident that further steps were required. Unfortunately, however, the team had moved onto other projects. In other words, the potentially breakthrough innovations the team had developed had become stuck after the first step of the walk.

How do you make sure that you take the second, third and 5,000<sup>th</sup> step of your innovation tightrope walk, so that you don't get stuck at the start?

Off The Record: It Ain't No Lie by Graham Coxon

I'm walking a tightrope from morning 'til night

From my bed to my bed and it don't feel right

But I know where I'm going and it ain't no lie

And I don't wanna waste it like those other guys

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