



x maazah

IDEABOOK

Thursday, November 2 11:30-1:30
Minneapolis, MN



FOUNDER INTERVIEW



FACILITATED IDEATION



ENERGY & CONNECTIONS

Thank you!



FOUNDER!



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Event purpose

To use ideation and brainstorming to generate ideas *and increase engagement* for the growth of Maazah.

PopUpThinkTank uses the power of ideation, brainstorming, and “divergent thinking” to generate not only ideas but also empathy, engagement, and next steps.

Format

Founder interview to get everyone up-to-speed. Warm-up exercise. Introduce eight breakout topics and 3 rules: 1) Use, Yes And, 2) Law of Two Feet, and 3) Write it down. Use a survey to gauge the next steps for each individual.

Who participated

2 founders + 1 facilitator. 25+ participant “thinkers” from MN Catalyst Angel cohort and the broader Twin Cities startup ecosystem. The event was sponsored by Forge North, Groove Investment Group, and BMO Harris Bank.

Thank you!

How to use these ideas

This is not a to-do list. Print this document. Read through without pressure. Read again and cross out ideas that don’t make sense or are too vague. Circle ideas that are actionable and high-impact. Underline ideas that need more research. Draw arrows to make connections.

*Asterisk indicates a vote for “favorite idea.” Each participant had one vote.

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1

Winning at Home

With our January launch at Target approaching, how can we energize our local fan base and simultaneously extend our reach to new audiences who may not be familiar with Maazah?

- Partner with Tavolo (Groove invested) to get introduced to local restaurants in support of Target Launch
- Marketing campaign “You’ve got to try this...”
- Strong, hip branding
- ****Create a Maazah moment - record your Maazah moment on TickTok or Insta w/ hashtag
- Get local chefs (Ann Kim) to use/offer product in their restaurant
- Monthly pizza @ Pizzeria Lola
- *Get chutney into a major sports arena to get tens of thousands of fans exposed to brand in one event (Target field, Target center, California sports teams_
- Promote it as a “healthy condiment” for health crowd
- Partner with Local Crate (localcrate.com), a Minnesota based meal kit company that also partners with local chefs (e.g. Ann Kim) to destroy local recipes (Local Crate is a Techstars company)
- Campaign to serve Maazah at Thanksgiving
- Mashup with Minny & Paul to get included in holiday gift boxes
- Have never had this product if it hasn’t been put on my food behind the counter. Saw it in bottles at lunch. Get bottles on tables in restaurants.
- Chef Sotherland restaurants & airport restaurants
- Minneapolis Public Schools - try it day plus coupon
- Maazah moment when trying & discovering how good it is “Ahh”
- Get email addresses and send monthly ‘ideas’ for using Maazah on ____ (pizza, hot dogs)
- Use Digiphy QR code to tell Maazah story



2

Crowdfunding

What factors or elements would motivate you to support a crowdfunding campaign?
Share effective strategies and approaches that you find most compelling.

- How do you make people feel like they are joining a community?
- Do you advertise your campaign on your bottle/product? QR code?
- Is this a donation or investment opportunity
- You have to have a companion social media strategy
- Creating effective communication/update strategy to your customers
- The success of your crowdfunding campaign will be determined by pre-fundraising activities (1:1 meetings, build a list, etc), weekly/bi-weekly events, and written testimonials.



3

“I Put Chutney on Chutney”

What's the recipe for sparking a Maazah revolution and cultivating a passionate brand community?

- Recipe Ingredients 1. Enthusiasm 2. Consistent communication 3. Inspires me 4. Build bridges - between friends, between ingredients, among family meals
- Sponsor a stadium or event
- *Can I put Maazah on my lutefisk? (What are some cross-cultural opportunities? How can this product add to my current life?)
- Creating awareness through people's love of food and desire to try new things
- Cookbook! Ex: all the ways to use Maazah
- Draw customers in with most eye-catching packaging / shelf presentation, create social buzz with those visuals paired with rave reviews. People will want to display in kitchens!
- Use a diverse range of influential voices to reach a wide range of consumers - what/how would all these people use it in their own unique ways? Celeb chefs, restaurants, publications, social media
- Celebrate Afghani heritage in media, and also educate how universal it can be used
- “What don't you put Maazah on?”
- “Add Maazah to your cart, it's just the start.”
- “Make room in your fridge for Maazah!”
- Share story - t-shirt & swag, on social media, on cooking show, on news-story interview, state fair booth with examples of use, want to hear from experts & also NOT-experts
- Get on some cooking show competitors
- Be the secret ingredient that all use
- Most cookbook dinner parties & figure out how to include Maazah in each dish
- Passionate brand with non-food swag



4

Startup Wisdom

As we manage the challenges of business growth, share with us leadership insights & best practices that will help us grow, expand, and lead a company to the next level.

- As you build the board, make sure they come with a perspective outside of the family
- Build a committee to help you hire
- Don't offload core responsibilities before you know the ins and outs fully
- Always be hiring, keep a list of prospects
- Don't be afraid to ask for feedback on burn rate from someone who did it successfully
- Leadership best practice: change roles, even if you're really good at your job. Learn the business from another perspective.
- Leadership best practice: create a build systems that enhance culture instead of destroying or undermining it
- Make sure you clear articulate expectations to avoid employee employee burnout. Founders are typically not as talented at managing teams, they're more visionary/creative - importance of mentors/advisors
- Leadership skills for CEO: sense making, vision, inventing, relating - find others who have different skills & fill in gaps
- Role of CEO: raising money & hiring/firing
- Leadership best practice: have a defined plan to engage the next generation(s) of family members (board, advisors, management)
- Norms > Habit > Culture
- Whhat is the culture of our family?
- What was 'normal' / 'expected'?
- You're always recruiting
- What does "no assholes" mean to you?
- Leadership best practice: Take time for personal & professional development for all team members – executive and management as well as "boots-on-the-ground"
- Leadership best practice: Hiring the right team members to create/grow the culture

4

Cont'd

- Leadership best practice: T-Square: X-Axis Visionary to Relating, Y-Axis - Inventing to Sensemaking (Figure out where you are. Find people who balance you.)
- ***Culture & brand should be intertwined - the way you engage with customers should be reflected in the way you run your business
- Create your culture & values now & live by them
- Hire for culture, hustle
- Culture - Bring your family values & tradition (Norms > Habits > Culture)
- Move from scrappy to systems
- Always be hiring, have a list ready
- Consciously diversity from you
- Always be learning
- Find a family business training curriculum/classes to help you define culture (Northwestern Kellogg, MIT)
- As you expand the team outside of your existing network, make sure hires are culture fit (Requires a super clear definition of culture and what it means for Maazah)
- HR is central to scaling: don't underestimate the importance of clearly defining culture, expectations, roles
- Hire people willing to learn (and never stop) > flexible, committed, smart



5

Strategic Partnerships

Beyond retailers and distributors, who might Maazah consider for collaborations such as other brands, chefs, bloggers/influencers, events, and beyond?

- Food service: let venues show customers how to pair products, create flavor connections
- Catering
- Branded condiments
- Content: authentic story (family, Afghanistan, global flavors), create shoppable moment, influencers & chef activations (recipe development, how to use)
- Food festivals/events
- Catering (more intimate)
- Local restaurants that celebrate brands they use
- Content > authentic story-telling, provides amazing content to retailers
- Trusted niche/local influencers
- Food kit partnership > drive trials (Hungry Root, Blue Apron, Hello Fresh, Minny/Pauly gift boxes or trays with an engaged audience)
- Foodservice > additional condiment offerings for trial
- Meal solution inclusion
- Play up refrigerated “look here”
- BOGO - free product w/ purchase of Maazah (crackers, veggies)



6

“Target” Audience

What types of food products do you typically look for when shopping at Target?

- Target launch party
- *Include MN Made sign/sticker for shelf at Target
- When you are in Target, go hang out in that aisle and watch how shoppers engage with the product; strike up a conversation to learn more
- Lunch stuff: premade frozen sandwich
- The story of Snickers - they turned their business around when they stopped competing against candy bars and started positioning Snickers as a meal/lunch alternative. Play with positioning Maazah in various food “spaces” - breakfast, snack, holidays, parties, family meals, health
- Get it Whole30 approved/endorsed
- Partner with hummus company to have it on top within the package (like how they add pesto or garlic, etc)
- What 2 or 3 other items can I grab with a Maazah product to have a 10-minute meal ready for my family?
- Fridge placement (salsa, dips)
- End cap, display
- Add into meal kit and how to add it in (flavor add)
- Keep next to food items
- Deli
- There is never a time I’m at Target and not open to trying something new or bringing something different home to the family
- Day to day, what I need for meals (dinner, lunch box, breakfast), milk, OJ, snacks, fruit, cereal
- Sweet talk Target into doing a demo - showcase how it goes on a variety of foods (pizza, cheese, crackers)
- A balance of price and quality; price is still an important consideration



7

Let's Think Bigger!

Dream with us. The sky is the limit. What did we miss? How can we think 10x - bigger and better?

- What other national grocery retailers could current products sell in?
- Maazah as teh secret ingredient on Food Network / Iron Chef
- The first food-first lifestyle brand
- ** Lifestyle brand focused on moments that bring people together
- ** "What do you dare to put it on?"
- Pair it with hummus, Maazah collaboration
- Trader Joes - a place constantly introducing new things
- Better: Circular economy for Maazah packaging OR produce the product near where it is sold
- Persian/Middle Eastern dessert paste (rosewater, cardamom, etc.)
- Surrounding industries: moment over flavor
- Where could you introduce Maazah to create a sense of community?
- **Practice Safe Saucing

8

Open!

This is an open table! Let's see where the conversation goes.

- Recipes on a scannable QRC social media brand ambassadors
- QRC is at the front of bottle “scan for uses”
- “It’s the new ketchup”
- How does the consumer know what it is when they see it? E.g. in Woodbury, brand ambassadors educate the public
- Product samples and demos in stores - what do I put this on?
- Slogan - What don’t you put it on?
- Education moments to win over the guest: sampling, recipes, combo suggestions (uses), explaining what Maazah is (ex: Frank’s Hot Sauce “I put that shit on everything.”
- Send it to Padma!
- Top Chef Challenge
- Bottle shape looks like juice - how can you more quickly indicate chut/sauce condiment?
- *Icons to show ways to use it (vs copy) (e.g. Eggs with chut, etc.)
- Find Maazah in the fridge (signage near shelf items)
- Serving suggestions and pictures on the label
- Adventurous Eating
- *Tips for use on label, package as art
- Send product to online recipe influencers, like smittenkitchen.com, allrecipes.com, simplyrecipes.com
- Charcuterie boards w/ product on it & package next to it
- State fair
- Superbowl platters with flavor
- Get on Jason Matheson Show
- Collab with Chef Yia Vang
- Brian David Gilbert ad like his Old Spice video



Survey responses

Thank you to those who completed the follow-up survey.

- “I thought the event was well organized, felt effective and was a good experience. I loved being a part of the brainstorming process and am open to helping out in the future!”
- “It was a great experience; learning about a startup, becoming part of the process and interacting with new people. The format was good at fostering discussion and generating ideas.”
- “It was a great time, always great to be in a room with people coming up with ideas to help a local brand. I left uplifted and inspired to keep building with them.”
- “Happy to help if anything comes up where the Maazah team thinks I would be helpful. Enjoyed the session!”
- “It was a great experience and hopefully can be very valuable for the founders!”
- “Though I was not there, I am a fan of the product, and am always spurred to see a Minnesota company win in the marketplace. I'd like to see Maazah end up on Oprah's favorite things. I'd like to see it get national attention and really ride this wave of women led businesses getting the spotlight. I never stop running out of marketing ideas.”

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Thank you!

Pete Kootsikas
Ava Najafi
Ellen Risch-Boody
Michael Rakes
Anne Mezzenga
Laura Jensen
Kelsey Ciatti-Miller
Delila Gonyea
Ben Ihde
Andrea Trimble Hart
Jack Dempsey
Adam Choe
Anna Peterson
Diane Rucker
Max Leibowitz
Mickayla Rosard
Shannon Steven
Amol Dixit
Rich Gammill
Stacy Voves
Jill Miller
Tracy Arnold
Dayo Idowu
Lisa Erickson



Strategy & Process

Divergent thinking meetings open up possibilities and explore what could be true. It's described as creative, visionary, and big-picture. *Everyone* is capable of divergent thinking. Convergent thinking prioritizes and moves forward. It wants to scope and sequence.

Three quick points:

1. Name the thinking expected of a space.
This helps participants know how to participate.
2. Separate a divergence and convergence with a night of sleep or a break.
3. Achieve emergence on your team (self-organizing, simultaneous divergence, and convergence) by practicing #1 and #2.

At PopUpThinkTank, we celebrate divergent thinking as more than a way to generate ideas and possibilities. Brainstorming also creates empathy and engagement among the participants. Thank you for joining us!

