

AHA.MOMENTS By Rebecca Kirkman

bright idea

How to flip the switch that lights the bulb

The struggle to come up with innovative ideas is nothing new. In 1939, advertising executive James Webb Young suggested ideas come from seeing new connections between bits and pieces of old information in his book *A Technique for Producing Ideas*. It seems local CEOs agree: We asked them to share techniques for coming up with ideas and personal “aha moments” that have shaped their businesses. Across the board, they recommend keeping your eyes and ears open – good ideas can come from the unlikelyst of sources.



DR. CORINNA LATHAN
co-founder and CEO,
AnthroTronix, Inc.

Eureka: We were
a hard tech company.

A few years ago, we were approached about doing a purely software product on a mobile platform. At first I thought, “We’re not a software company.” I think the aha came when I realized we’ve been doing mobile apps since we started, they just weren’t called that. That was an aha moment for me because I realized it was a natural evolution of our company to identify as a mobile computing platform company. I knew that our team could execute on this project [that has since] become one of our flagship projects: the Defense Automated Neurobehavioral Assessment tool, an Android-based tool that screens for the military. If I hadn’t had that moment, we might not have agreed to partner on it.

Flip the switch: We’re a bunch of engineers, so our instinct is to poke holes in ideas and find out why they won’t work. I went to an improv workshop on a retreat, and there’s a whole concept in improv called “Yes, and” where you have to build on an idea. You can’t say “Yes, but.” The concept of “Yes, and” is something I’ve introduced [with my team].