GENERAL BUSINESS READING can lead to some discoveries that have a very direct connection to what we do at STLE headquarters. Here’s a case in point: “The Right Ideas in All the Wrong Places,” published by Strategy+Business, an online publication from the Booz & Co. consulting firm. You can find the article online at http://www.strategy-business.com/article/cs00007?qko=e6c6d.

The authors, Ken Favaro and Nadim Yacteen, explain why the most creative and inspired thoughts always seem to happen when we are not trying to have a great idea. They occur when shaving, running or listening to music, not in a brainstorming session or a department meeting.

Consider, for example, the story of Henry Ford’s inspiration for the moving assembly line, which replaced the fixed assembly line where cars were stationary and worked moved. The inspiration reportedly came after an employee’s visit to a Chicago slaughter house. The gentleman told Ford that the pig carcasses were hung on a line that rotated from one stationary butcher to the next until the pigs were fully disassembled. It soon became a Eureka moment that changed manufacturing forever.

The article’s authors cite two sources in their attempt to explain this phenomenon. The first is the work of Eric Kandel, an American neuropsychiatrist and winner of the 2000 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for showing how humans produce a new thought. A portion of Kandel’s theory explains that from birth our brains store various stimuli on “memory shelves.” When presented with a challenge, we search these shelves to see if there are any connections with the problem at hand. The search is much easier when the brain relaxes, which explains why big practical ideas seem to happen at unlikely moments.

A second source, Columbia Business School Professor William Duggan, moves the concept from theory to business reality. His work on creative thinking describes a three-part process that starts with accurate identification of the real problem, followed by an inventory of possible solutions and then “intelligent recombination.”

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Part three of this formula is the key to success. As Steve Jobs once said, “Creativity is just connecting things.” While that may be true, nobody gets to three if they don’t have some things on the shelf for reference!

This is where STLE fits into this story. Let us be the place where creativity starts. We offer a massive inventory of articles, Webinars, education courses and opportunities for business networking.

When the next business challenge arises, make sure your memory shelves are well-stocked with all the valuable goods that an organization like STLE can offer.