

WHITE PAPER

# BRINGING IDEAS TO REALITY

A JOINT INNOVATION PERSPECTIVE





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# A HIGH-LEVEL VIEW

When innovation is discussed, people often say, “it’s all about execution; ideas are easy” or “innovation is about creativity and only creative people can innovate.” Experience has shown, however, that generating a good idea that can be executed rapidly requires a good process and an organisation’s ability to learn. This learning process must take place internally, through a culture of knowledge sharing, and externally, from the ecosystem of value-add partners, like Visionary Marketing.

Our joint innovation approach supports customers as they travel through their “innovation journey.” The aim of this paper is to provide methodological approaches to the kinds of issues depicted in our previous

white paper entitled “The Far Side of Digital Transformation.”

## WHAT IS JOINT INNOVATION?

To some, innovation means developing new products or services. To others the focus of innovation is on the generation, prioritisation and development of radically new ideas (as opposed to on-going product development). Still, others will interpret innovation as the process of successfully implementing new ideas. Whether incremental or disruptive, however, innovation always benefits from experimentation that involves customers and partners. Joint innovation, as it is called,



accelerates the innovation process and the time to market.

## LEADING EDGE NOT BLEEDING EDGE

Whether innovation emerges from pure creativity or from business requirement analysis is a spurious question. Both are required, and only the combination of the two will produce business benefits. It is generally accepted that when a product or service is useful, it should sell in large quantities. In this context, marketing new products or services is indeed very straightforward, i.e., requirements can be measured, and these measurements can be immediately applied to product or service design. However, in reality it is very rare that things happen that way, since innovation is very much about marketing the unknown<sup>[1]</sup>. Hence, delivering successful innovations for the enterprise is not so much about eliciting underlying requirements as it is about surprising people with new ideas, new approaches or new ways of marketing existing products or services. It is also about jointly experimenting with new things and learning from experience. As a result, innovation is always the product of a dual process, mixing technological advances and inventions with market responses and business requirements.

## WHO NEEDS INNOVATION?

S&P 500 companies pay back hundreds of billions of dollars to shareholders every year. Even when the economy is faltering, dividend payments stayed strong and that was certainly the case in 2015 which was a record year in that respect. One may postulate that these companies have squeezed out all possible efficiency through cost-cutting measures and now have cash to spare. They have reached a point where further cost cutting measures could severely impact their business models. The acceleration of market deregulation around the world, the long-term reductions in transportation and communication costs and the new opportunities for competition provided by new technologies and scientific advances have had a significant impact on global business rules. In such a global and competitive world, corporate organisations can no longer wait for changes to happen for fear of losing market share and potential for improvement. As a consequence, the need for innovation is deeply felt, and that is true of smaller sized firms too. In that context, it may be a good idea to resort to third-party support in order to tap into the knowledge and experience of seasoned professionals in the field of innovation and transformation. This can help those clients to significantly increase their chances of success and the pace of delivery of their new products or services.

# THE PURPOSE OF JOINT INNOVATION

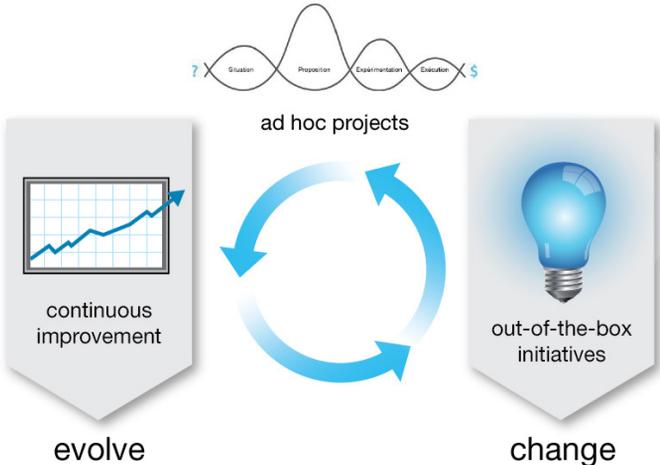
Most corporations are looking for an innovation process that will lead them to the next iteration of their business model—in effect, a self-driven process that will cause disruption in their marketplace or take them into new markets to create new value. The disruption could happen in a number of different ways: through the introduction of a new technology, a different commercial model or a new operating model (or any combination of the three).

## THE INNOVATION JOURNEY

The innovation journey begins with a discussion. Experience has shown that a well-prepared-for, high-impact session, typically taking place over several days, results in a rich array of qualified ideas ready for implementation and a highly motivated team of people ready to execute rapidly. We can become engaged at any point in the discussion, for example to help explore the relevance of emerging communications technologies and their applicability to specific scenarios. Where we begin (our “point of application”) varies based on each client’s needs.

## LESSONS LEARNED IN THE FIELD

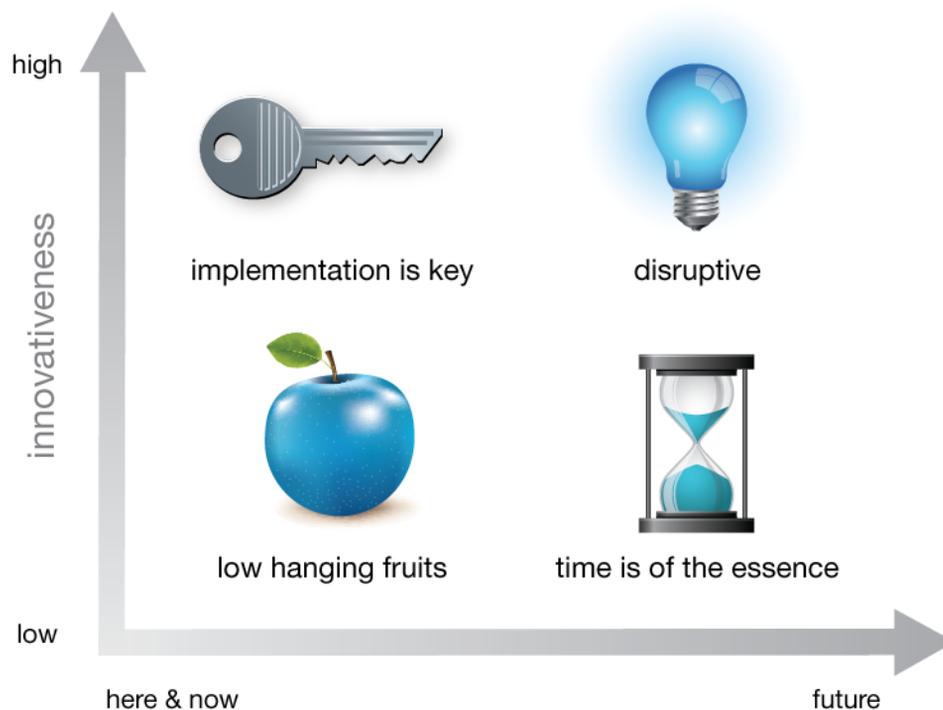
Over the past few years, we have witnessed dramatic changes in the business landscape. The onus is on business leaders in order to execute not only core business activities but to show that they can handle the challenges imposed on them by entrants. Boiling everything down to Uber would be over-simplistic, the changes at stake are far broader. They are even the result of over 50 years of process automation due to the generalisation of IT, not to mention the past quarter of a century of online expansion through the relentless worldwide development of the Internet. In that context, and more than ever, organisations are fighting to preserve their core business, but they often want more. There is indeed a growing universal requirement for innovation to be embedded within the overall business approach. We have found this requirement to be two-fold:



On the one hand, clients want to update their current platforms to better accommodate technical changes within the framework of their current business. However, the purpose is not to update the current technology simply to keep pace with changing technology; rather it is to ensure that everything possible will be made in order to evolve the legacy architecture and therefore ensure that the maximum level of efficiency can be achieved through innovation. This holistic approach spreads across all domains, allowing for convergence to be used to its full capability. In this first

instance—called continuous improvement—the active cooperation of all stakeholders orchestrated within the joint innovation initiative.

On the other hand, in our fiercely competitive world, corporations are also looking for an innovation process that will lead them to the next iteration of their business model, cause disruption in their marketplace, or take them into new markets to create new value. We call these “out-of-the-box” initiatives and can map them on a matrix with four distinct types of innovation.



# HOW TO GENERATE PRODUCTIVE INNOVATIVE IDEAS

## IDEATION

*noun* *ide·a·tion* \ī-dē-'ā-shən\  
*The capacity for or the act of forming or entertaining ideas* <sup>[2]</sup>

An ideation process is the process of generating, managing and prioritizing a list of improvement ideas. The process used in the development and implementation of new ideas is key to ensuring that the ideas generated address the common interest. The diagram below shows the process that we use with our clients to correct, augment and transform an initial set of innovative ideas.

This process is managed by our consultants as a team with your subject matter experts. This is the idea generation phase, which does not require validation from the top of the innovation governance (described later).

The second phase of the ideation process involves filtering these initiatives to obtain a short list of well-structured ideas in synch with the client's policies, while eliminating

all ideas that are not within the client's strategy, which have too much risk, etc. During this phase, the innovation matrix can help balance “low—hanging fruit” with disruptive innovations. Whereas phase one (idea generation) is a creative phase, its purpose being to generate as many ideas as possible, phase two is about ensuring that the ideas are useful to our clients.

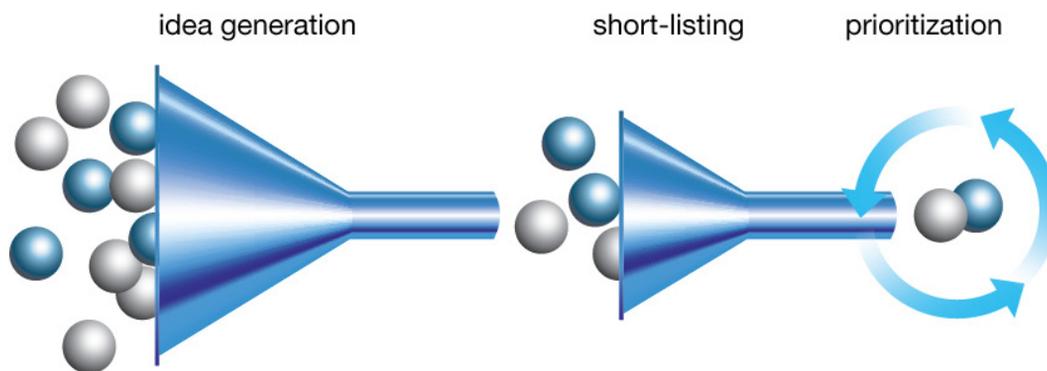
Phase three is the prioritisation phase. Prioritisation uses business prioritisation techniques (BPT), a fairly common innovation approach that our innovation experts have performed many times in the field.

At the end of phase three, the prioritised items are validated with the top level of our innovation governance to identify project sponsorship and to ensure support for the initiatives throughout the organization. Depending on the context, a fast—track ideation process can be used to handle suggestions from the field that cannot be addressed promptly or properly through normal processes <sup>[3]</sup>.

## THE NEED FOR METHODOLOGY

Despite the fact that generating new concepts is a “gift” possessed by many if not every one of us, asking individuals to be “playful” or to “think harder” is not really helpful to the process. It may even be stressful to individuals who are short on

new ideas. When asked to be creative, most individuals will react in one of three ways: they will jump to an obvious conclusion to avoid embarrassment and move to another issue; they will be led to an impasse because their minds are fixed on issues and problems that could not be solved in the past; or, out of perplexity, they will say nothing at all.



# INNOVATING JOINTLY WITH VISIONARY MARKETING

The core capabilities required for innovation include: the generation of new ideas, the management of the ideas, the implementation or program management of the ensuing projects and value management. These capabilities are applied in the context of exploration (scanning), acceleration (rapidly and continuously combining and testing the ideas to create valuable business propositions), mobilisation (turning the propositions into reality) and finally, realisation (managing the outcome to ensure that value is created).

These capabilities must be supported by organisational structure and process. They can only be executed in a culture that supports the belief that innovation is essential for growth and survival, and everything must be linked into the company's strategy.

This management, understanding and support must be translated into the design and strict implementation of a mandatory innovation governance model aimed at creating favorable conditions

for the generation, development and implementation of new concepts.

Top management involvement in that process—through the above-mentioned governance model—is crucial and conditions the success of the implementation of the joint innovation process.

Visionary Marketing (combined with a network of sharp focused experts) is a driving force in idea creation and management. We have the ability to pose potentially disruptive ideas (technical, commercial and operational) to clients because of the quality of our people and our specifically designed processes and tools in environments designed to support collaboration. We present our ability to innovate so our customers can combine those disruptive ideas with other essential dimensions, including changes in the business environment (global and local), lifestyle changes and other similar extraneous factors that impact business. Then we can both put that learning into a context that generates value.

## SOME OF THE INNOVATION TOOLS WE USE

As suggested earlier, there is nothing magical about innovation. The stakes are too high, and creativity is too serious a business to be left to chance. Above all, it requires method and management drive and, more importantly, it demands preparation. We have created a specific joint innovation methodology to that effect—to ensure that all the critical aspects of innovation are covered. We have also designed an innovation toolkit covering the four major stages of the joint innovation process, from preparation to delivery.

## VISIONARY MARKETING AT THE FOREFRONT OF INNOVATION

Visionary Marketing and its consultants have a track-record of being part in innovations from very early days. We took part in the digitisation of many processes from the end of the 1980s, designed and deployed one of the first CRM systems worldwide in the early 1990s. Most of our consultants have been involved in IT, Internet, online content and e-commerce matters since the very beginnings of the Web and we have been involved in the development of Web marketing—if not helped shape the future of Web marketing—from the very beginning of Web, in Europe, the United Kingdom and other parts of the World.

# DO WE NEED A MODEL FOR CREATIVITY?

Many would argue that creativity is not directed by process and that a model is not a valid incentive for generating novel ideas <sup>[4]</sup>. Being Inventive and imagining new ideas would be described by most as the ability to let one's mind wander and let the unexpected happen. As a matter of fact, if we look at Art as a primary source of inspiration for creativity, no real standardized methodology can be derived from practice which would show the way forward in terms of imagination. Yet that does not mean that artists are not resorting to creativity methods that help them come up with new ideas. On the contrary, a multiplicity of methods is used to create Art. One of the most striking examples used by most, if not all, artists is the ability to repeat almost indefinitely the same theme over and over again until new patterns emerge. Variations on a theme abound in music (remember the amazing Goldberg variations <sup>[5]</sup>), and they have been used time and time again in painting, as well.

Likewise, when it comes to business issues and creativity in the business world, we cannot exclude methods and processes. But it would be wrong to assume that we have to resort to the same procedures over and over.

Many models dealing with creativity have been discussed in literature, and none of them are necessarily right or wrong. They merely serve the purpose of guiding the mind and channeling new ideas so one does not lose exciting new opportunities that are worth developing. On the whole, most modern creativity models are used to establish a correct balance between imagination and analysis and to purposefully generate new ideas under the direction of a facilitator (older models suggested that imagination was the result of a subconscious process). Working with these newly generated ideas can turn them into concrete realities. At Visionary Marketing, we provide the best of both worlds—fostering imagination and creativity and delivering the framework for the valid and accurate business-driven analysis of new ideas.

## ABOUT WORKSHOPS AND OTHER CREATIVITY TOOLS

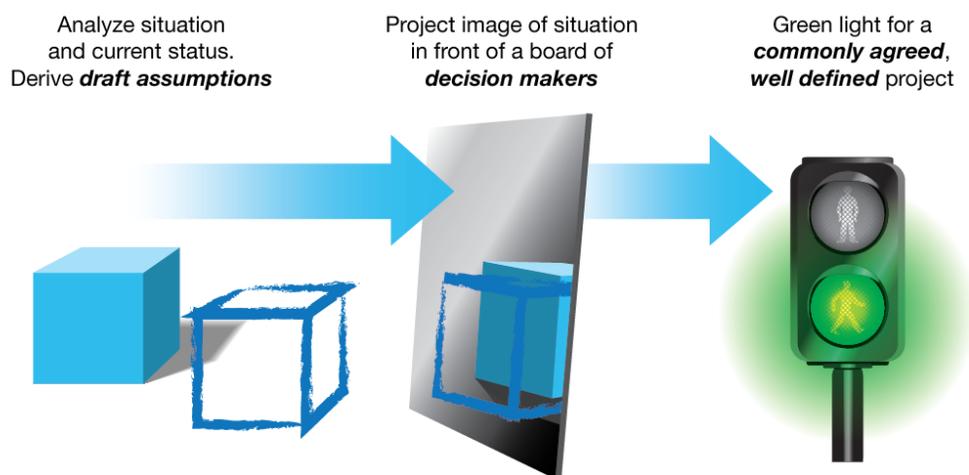
Most of us are familiar with the standard workshop approach. It is typically a facilitated process consisting of pushing information to attendees, some sharing on a group level and fixed activities designed to reach an outcome. This approach has a place when the required outcome is, for example, to reach consensus among a group. However, the process needs to be different when creativity is coupled with an unknown outcome. In this particular case, the innovation workshop is the result of a preliminary investigation, which will have already occurred. Face-to-face interviews and preliminary meetings identify the predominant subjects that need to be investigated and to prepare for a successful workshop.

The goal of the joint innovation assessment phase is to prepare the preliminary workshops. There is no magic formula for solving all issues or questions related to innovation; each client and engagement requires a unique combination of elements from an a la carte menu of tools and set of instruments, each with a different purpose and method aimed at solving a particular issue within the ideation process. For the preparation of an engagement, our consultants will employ one or more of these tools and instruments to achieve the objective(s) set forth in the joint innovation initiative. The tools make up the innovation toolkit. Each of the tools can and must be adapted to the context of the situation to which it applies.

## PROJECTIVE SURVEYS (PRINCIPALLY) IN BOARD MEETINGS

Projective surveys is one of our key tools with regard to the roll-out of joint innovation programs: we start from the assessment phase and therefore establish a diagnosis—some sort of a snapshot of the current situation—in which we will be able to project the audience: managing directors, executive committee members, top decision-makers. This will not only give them an idea of where the company is at the very moment, it will also help them project themselves into the future and what the business is heading towards.

The projective survey makes it possible for such decision makers to picture (and face) the current situation and imagine what things could look like for the company “tomorrow” (establishing milestones for “tomorrow” and adding dates on the schedule will be best performed in a subsequent phase). This shows the decision-makers a clear depiction of the move from A to B, a mental yet obvious representation of digital transformation and what it can bring to them and their business as a whole. This methodology has been tried and tested at various occasions in Britain (where we first designed it) and other countries.



# OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF THE JOINT INNOVATION PROGRAM

## JOINT INNOVATION PROGRAM

The joint innovation program can be divided into two parts. The first part is dedicated to uncovering potential business opportunities and/or issues and eventually the appraisal and high level design of potential technological solutions. We call this process the joint innovation assessment whereby we evaluate the innovation context, the environment and the potential of new ideas which could lead us to the creation and the launch of innovative projects.

The joint innovation assessment phase may be preceded by an innovation session. Such a session, which may be a simple walk through ~~our innovation garden~~ or a more customized discovery workshop along a specific set of topics, can fuel the imagination and help prepare the next steps along the innovation journey.

But the joint innovation assessment is only a means to an end. Pending the prioritisation of the estimated business benefit for each new idea generated by the ideation process, we may then launch joint innovative projects. Of course, not all ideas will lead to real projects. It is perfectly normal for ideas—even though deemed sound at the outset—to be excluded from the process at a later stage. It is how the ideation process

is conducted that determines the richness of the overall joint innovation program. That is why precise heuristics of creativity must be defined—to avoid a dearth of information or ideas that could lead to the deferral of the launch of new joint initiatives.

We have so far described several different types of joint innovation projects. However, this list is by no means comprehensive. It could be augmented with new, inventive co-development techniques and related business models, starting with simple, advanced tests of potential future services to be launched and ending with the design of complex, mutually beneficial innovative solutions between several business partners (in this case, joint innovation extends beyond your sole interests and sessions may involve one or several business partners). Intermediate options include the design of joint specifications for future initiatives between partners and the prototyping of a new solution aimed at solving a particular business issue of a client or partner.

## HOW WE NURTURE JOINT INNOVATION

### **The heuristics of creativity**

Our consultants will prepare and facilitate the innovation workshops and the wrap-up

and will follow up on workshop results. The heuristics (or rule of thumb) of creativity is a list of guidelines which each participant in an innovation session must understand and adhere to. The workshop moderators apply these rules and ensure that attendees abide by them. Visionary Marketing has developed these guidelines and they serve as a backbone for our creativity sessions.

### Directed Creativity <sup>[6]</sup>

Paul Plsek's definition of directed creativity is "the purposeful production of creative ideas in a topic area, followed up by deliberate effort to implement some of those ideas." Directed creativity is the process of revealing the inventiveness which is buried inside each one of us but that we may not always show or practice for fear of appearing foolish. It is not just sufficient to enjoin people to be creative. Directed creativity is the process of revealing the inventiveness which is buried inside each one of us but that we may not always show or practice for fear of appearing foolish. It is not just sufficient to enjoin people to be creative. Directed creativity is the set of methods and tools which makes the innovation workshop a success.

Innovation workshops are undeniably the most elaborate way to generate ideas in group sessions. These workshops are a mixture of playful exercises, serious

presentations and working sessions. The lively—and to some extent exhilarating—character of parts of these sessions, however, impresses wrong ideas in the minds of many who think that an innovation workshop is mere child's play. In actuality, it requires a lot of hard work and preparation, including the strenuous task of moderation, which must be strictly executed during the workshop.

## EMBARKING ON A JOINT INNOVATION JOURNEY

In this paper, we have established that innovation is at the top of most corporate agendas and that finding the right level of innovation through a balanced approach is the right path for continued growth and success.

 When it comes to outsourcing, there is an additional incentive for exploring joint innovation. Projects which span several years should incorporate both technological evolution (continuous improvement) and the generation of fresh ideas that will enable you to swiftly adapt your business model to changing market conditions and be ahead of competitors' out-of-the-box initiatives. The Visionary Marketing joint innovation program addresses these challenges with a fresh and unique approach.

## WHO WE ARE



Yann Gourvennec has a long-standing experience in marketing, information systems and Web marketing. He created [visionarymarketing.com](http://visionarymarketing.com) in 1996 and since then, he has practiced Web strategy, e-business and Web communications in the field. He has been a member of [socialmedia.org](http://socialmedia.org) from 2008 till 2013 in the USA and he co-founded Media Aces, the French Association for enterprises and social media. He is a lecturer, a keynote speaker, an author and blogger. His latest opus *Mastering Digital Marketing Like a Boss* is due for publication at the end of 2014. In early 2014, he went from intrapreneur to entrepreneur when he founded his digital marketing agency Visionary Marketing, in partnership with Effinity, a digital marketing company based in Brazil, Germany, Italy, Spain and France.



Thierry de Baillon has a dual scientific and artistic background and education. He supported major French fashion design companies with the uncovering of emerging social and cultural trends. He then served as brand strategy and product development advisor for large French-based international organisations (GDF, Garnier, ST Dupont, UNICEF), designed and launched successful consumer products for Creeks, and developed their e-commerce Website in 1998. In 2005, he joined the Capgemini group as head of online and internal social network initiatives for Sogeti. He also advised Capgemini's clients on collaboration and transformational organisation issues. Thierry is author or co-author of publications such as *Right Sourcing: Enabling Collaboration* or *Wirearchy: S* and is the initiator of *The Future of [Collaborative] Enterprise*, an open research project.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Marketing the Unknown: Developing Market Strategies for Technical Innovations by Paul Millier, 1999
2. Adapted from The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition
3. In that case, a special set of guidelines applies
4. “[...] it is important to note that some experts dismiss the notion that creativity can be described as a sequence of steps in a model. For example, Vinacke (1953) is adamant that creative thinking in the arts does not follow a model. In a similar vein, Gestalt philosophers like Wertheimer (1945) assert that the process of creative thinking is an integrated line of thought that does not lend itself to the segmentation implied by the steps of a model. But while such views are strongly held, they are in the minority.” Paul Plesk, Op.cit.
5. “All the thirty-two pieces are built upon the same thirty-two-note ground bass and its implied harmony [...] the rhythm of which is maintained throughout the work. [...] In some movements, the theme acquires different harmonic flavours, while in others it is transferred to the high pitch range by the hand-crossing texture”. Yo Tomita, Queen’s University, Belfast [<http://www.mu.qub.ac.uk/tomita/essay/cu4.html>]
6. Creativity, Innovation, and Quality by Paul E. Plsek, Irwin Professional Publishing

For more information about Visionary Marketing, visit our website: [visionarymarketing.com](http://visionarymarketing.com)

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Visionary Marketing - 80 rue Taitbout - F-75009 Paris - France  
UK: +44 7092 224 740 France: +33 1 4018 7834





