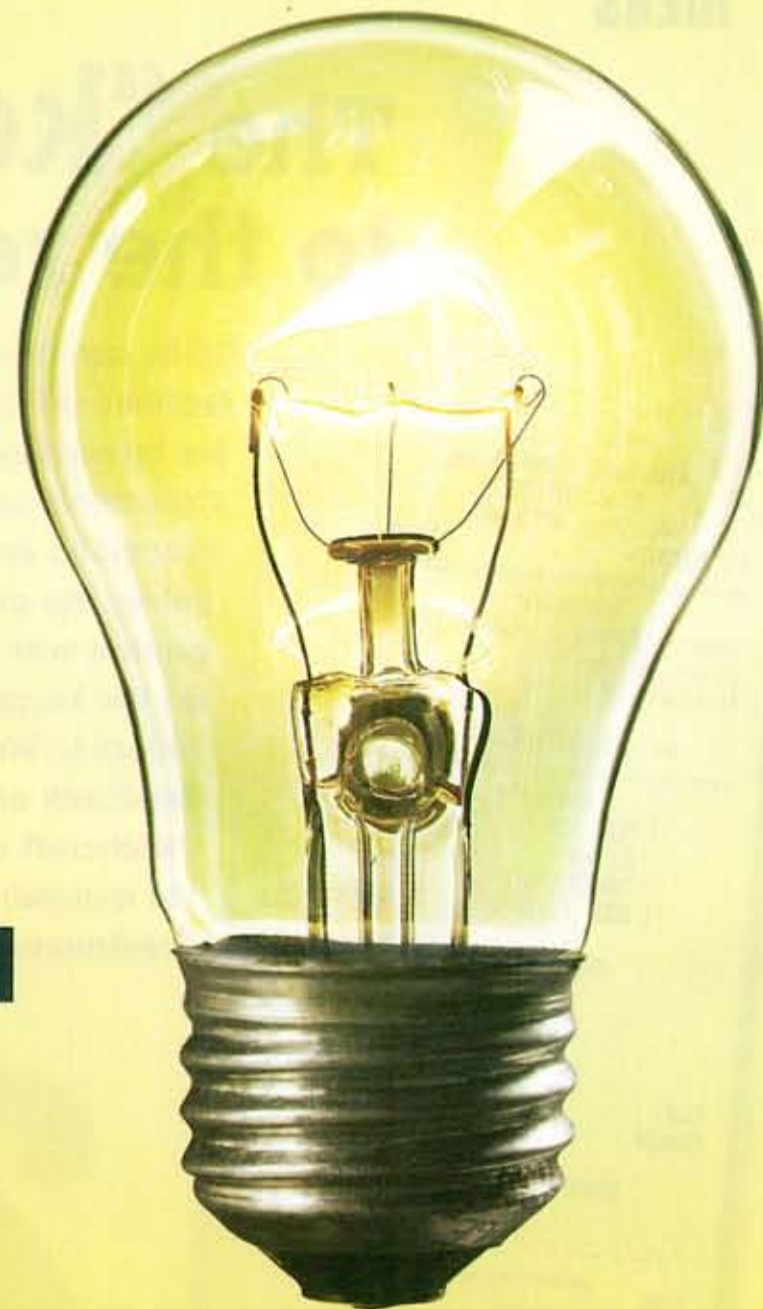


50 GREAT IDEAS



BY PATRICIA COBE WITH
MICHAELA CAVALLARO,
JANET FORMAN,
JOAN M. LANG,
JANIE SCHNEIDER
AND TH STRENK

THIS IS OUR THIRD ANNUAL 50 GREAT IDEAS ISSUE, AND WE FELT IT was about time to come clean: a great idea isn't all that great. Who hasn't had one? In fact, you might look through these pages and find stuff you thought about yourself... but did you do anything about it? That's the key. A great idea is only half the story, if that. What makes the things in this issue stand out isn't just that they're cool or save money or whatever, but that somebody acted on their idea. As Thomas Edison, a guy with a few great ideas of his own, put it, "The value of an idea lies in the using of it." Amen.

1 The "key" to the restroom

QSRs can have a hard time keeping bathroom facilities off-limits to non-paying guests. Signs are ignored and keys are lost. At 'wichcraft, Tom Colicchio's sandwich eatery in New York, San Francisco and Las Vegas, a secret password solves the problem. Every customer receipt is printed with an access code; when it's entered on the keypad outside the bathroom, the door unlocks. "We've gotten overwhelmingly positive feedback on the keypads," claims Sisha Ortuzar, 'wichcraft chef and partner. "Plus it's easier to maintain cleanliness—and vandalism in our restrooms has completely stopped."



2 Maybe they'll come for pie

The coastal city of Rockland, Maine, is bustling with tourists all summer long, but come January, winter hibernation sets in. To encourage visitors, the Historic Inns of Rockland teamed up to launch Pies on Parade. Participants sample a wide selection of sweet and savory homemade

pies, attend pie making and decorating demos and receive a collection of pie recipes.

Proceeds are donated to the local food pantry.



3 Group orders made easy

Online ordering by office workers has boosted lunch business industry-wide. Even so, most restaurants aren't up to speed when it comes to group orders for meetings and other functions.

It's usually up to one employee to use low-tech pencil and paper to collect all the information and make a list. The Conshohocken, Pennsylvania-based Saladworks chain has developed a paperless—and more personal—solution:

"Invitation Order." The lunch e-vite eliminates the hassle of running from desk to desk; it can be e-mailed out in the morning by one staff member and each participant either declines or accepts and makes a selection.

The originator of the invite then submits the order through the "click. pick. quick." button on the Saladworks Web site.



5 Recycling for refunds

With company-owned hybrid delivery cars and organic ingredients, Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based Pizza Fusion is going straight for environmentally concerned customers. So Eric Haley, the company's vice president of marketing, says it was a no-brainer to implement a pizza box recycling program. About 10 percent of customers return the boxes, for which they receive 25 cents off their next order. "In terms of the recycling market, that's actually a pretty good return," says Haley.



4 A fish on the line

Wonder whether the seafood your purveyor claims is sustainable really is? If your cell phone's handy, you can have an answer in seconds. FishPhone, a text messaging service sponsored by the Blue Ocean Institute, provides info on over 90 species of fish and shellfish. Send a text to 30644 with the message FISH and the name of the seafood in question, and you'll get a text back with a ranking that calls out environmental and health concerns. Standard text messaging rates apply.

