

BRIEFING PAPER
BLUEPRINT FOR A NEW
GREAT EXHIBITION

Introduction

Innovation is so rarely appreciated. We perhaps notice the changes to the phones in our pockets, or the slight updates of the software that we use, but there has been a growing sense that things have simply slowed down – where are our driverless cars and fusion reactors?

This perception, however, does not reflect reality. Innovation takes place around us every day, and in all avenues of human endeavour. Our cars may not yet fully drive themselves or fly, but they have become significantly safer, greener, and more pleasant to use. We may not yet be getting our electricity from fusion reactors, but every year sees improvement to countless manufacturing processes and to energy capture and storage. Much of this improvement is simply not seen, because of the nature of our economy, and because of how far we've already come. The UK's manufacturing sector for example produces more value than at any time in history, yet because so few people now work in manufacturing – because it has become so automated and efficient – few people are aware of what is happening.

The same story applies to agriculture, and in many services that consumers do not directly experience themselves. Medical procedures and medicines are being developed at an astonishing rate, and software is transforming industries beyond recognition. But as consumers and workers, today largely employed only in the service sector, we see barely the tip of the iceberg of what is being done – and what could be done even faster still.

This may sound like the natural order of things. The transition to a services economy is simply a sign of success, of a maturing economy. But it is a problem.

We depend on economic growth, and by extension on the innovation that supports it. The more innovators we have, the better, because the faster our living standards improve and the richer we become. With that wealth comes all sorts of further benefits, not least making it easier to support our welfare state, even as its costs increase because of an ageing population. The same can be said of having the resources to solve environmental problems. We have grown accustomed to a certain rate of improvement each year – we have even become dependent on it.

But the innovators who make those improvements possible are extremely rare. Very few people throughout human history have innovated at all, and that is still the case. Although there are more innovators alive in the world today than ever before, we could still benefit from more. Yet the avenues through which people become innovators are still ad hoc and limited – more the product of accident and chance, than of systematic effort. The key to spreading innovation – an improving mentality – is exposure to existing innovators. But because those innovators' achievements are so rarely visible or appreciated, there are few chances for people to catch that innovating bug.

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It usually happens, as it always has, through an innovator just happening to be among one's family, neighbours, or classmates. Young people considering what they want to do with their lives are far more likely to consider becoming lawyers, doctors, or consultants – professions where innovation can still happen, but where it is not integral – than to think seriously about how to improve processes, products, or whole industries. Innovation, for the vast majority of people, is still a distant afterthought, if it's thought about at all.

There is, however, one major tried and tested method to expose the population to innovation – and thus to increase the likelihood of people applying themselves to improvement. That method is to use exhibitions of industry.

Exhibitions of industry

The key to spreading innovation is exposing people to it. People need to be able to experience it, meet the people responsible, and see what they do. We are all, as consumers, somewhat aware of the marginal improvement to certain technologies of course. Consumer electronics, for example, come out with new versions every year. Yet we experience this improvement in a piecemeal fashion, only rarely appreciating the size or significance of what has been done – the effort, creativity, and ingenuity that it takes.

Exposure to innovation can also be useful beyond young people considering what they want to do with their lives. Awareness of what is really happening with innovation is useful to policymakers who are concerned about economic growth, to investors who might want to support innovators' projects, to businesses hoping to stay ahead of the curve, and to the wider public of potential adopters looking for goods and services that will make their lives better.

At the end of the eighteenth century, exhibitions of industry became one of the key tools for policymakers hoping to boost innovation. The first major national exhibition took place in France in 1798, and was repeated every few years later. These national exhibitions were a core feature of France's industrial policy, as it rushed to catch up with the rapid technological developments of Britain's Industrial Revolution.

These French exhibitions were state-run and state-funded (initially from accumulated patent fees), with the head of state himself awarding medals and cash prizes for the best works on display. Some of the very best exhibitors were even admitted to the Légion d'honneur, France's highest order of merit – all to ensure that every manufacturer in the country would want to take part. As a result, exhibitions could provide a detailed snapshot of the nation's manufacturing capabilities, serving as a sort of national audit in the days before modern GDP statistics. They revealed the best of every industry in the country, showing who was ahead and who was behind.

From the state's perspective this gave them valuable information about where to focus subsidies, or how to improve various other policies. Industries or regions that noticeably lagged behind could provide evidence to would-be reformers, and stimulate initiatives to catch up. In a more direct way, too, the exhibition prizes themselves could be used to motivate industrialists to solve particular technological bottlenecks. For France's 1801 exhibition, for example, the prize jury prioritised the application of art to industry; in 1834, they paid special attention to products that could be mass-produced cheaply; in 1839, they took into account whether products were made outside of the major cities, to encourage regional development. The exhibitions thus served as lightning rods for country-wide innovative and scientific efforts every few years.

From the perspective of the people who sent in exhibits – manufacturers, artists, merchants, scientists, and engineers – the events were a direct inducement to improvement. The people who submitted inferior exhibits could directly see, all in one place, the things they needed to do to catch up. It gave the laggards the information they needed to emulate their peers, and perhaps even to exceed them the next time. And the leaders that year could revel in their superiority, hoping to be recognised by the prize jury and benefiting from the exposure of their products to the many thousands of exhibition visitors. The rewards for outdoing their fellow exhibitors were substantial, both in terms of prestige and future sales.

From the perspective of the visitors, too, an exhibition raised their standards as consumers. It exposed them to the latest products, allowing them to see the best of design by directly comparing the exhibits. When consumers were uninformed, manufacturers could easily become complacent, finding that people bought their wares even when their products were not very good. They could take their market for granted, sapping any incentive to improve. Exhibitions shattered this complacency. They showed consumers what was possible, educating them in taste, and forcing producers to cater to their heightened demands. Once the paying public had been exposed to the best, they would settle for nothing less.

On top of all this, the exhibitions acted as engines of serendipity, forging entirely new and unpredictable connections. The manufacturer exhibiting textiles might come across a new material from an unfamiliar region, prompting them to import it for the first time. An inventor working on a niche problem might see the scientific demonstration of a concept that had not occurred to them, providing a solution.

And there could be an international element. Copying the French example of national exhibitions of industry, Britain in 1851 held the Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations – famous for its Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, and now known as the first of the World's Fairs. The event explicitly showcased the things that innovators from around the world were doing, allowing manufacturers to learn from one another, and in general encouraging countries to show their best and then raise their game. By revealing who was ahead and who was behind – among countries, regions, producers, artists, and scientists – it inspired emulation, creating a spirit of productive competition.

Consumers also got a chance to compare the products on offer both at home and abroad. The event's designers recognised that visitors would clamour for new imports and for lower tariffs on them, while forcing domestic producers to improve their quality to compete. It was intended to be an engine of free trade – and it was, with many subsequent international exhibitions laying the groundwork for major free trade deals, international treaties on postage and telegraph rates, and the democratisation of passports beyond just those considered “respectable.”

In summary:

1. Exhibitions of industry showcase the latest innovations and achievements in science, technology, and the arts. They inspire further progress and innovation, and help to raise awareness of the important work being done.
2. Exhibitions foster cooperation and trade. They provide an opportunity for people from different cultures and backgrounds to come together and learn from one another, helping to foster national or international cooperation and exchange.
3. Exhibitions educate and inspire the public. They provide a unique learning opportunity, showcasing the latest innovations and achievements. They thus help to build a market for the innovations on display, while inspiring people to become innovators themselves.

So much for the Victorians, what about now?

Many similar events have sought to recapture the spirit of the Great Exhibition. In the UK alone, major events like the 1951 Festival of Britain, the 2000 Millennium Experience, the 2018 Great Exhibition of the North, and 2022's various Unboxed projects have all sought to be national events of the same scale.

Yet all of these attempts have missed the point. Their organisers have conceived of exhibitions as merely big events to draw in visitors, promoting tourism and providing entertainment. They have completely lost the original focus on industry. The same applies to many of the World Fairs of recent years. Despite being notional successors to the Great Exhibition of 1851, they have become highly-curated events, with their displays trying to convey abstract themes. They have become opportunities for governments and their PR agencies to partake in wishful national branding exercises, their displays put together by committees of designers, rather than being platforms for businesses, innovators and scientists to showcase their achievements themselves. Most exhibitions today have become about ‘infotainment’, seeking to draw in visitors for the sake of drawing in visitors, rather than being focused on industry.

The closest modern equivalents to Victorian-style exhibition of industries are instead specialist industry fairs and specialist academic conferences. These at least retain the focus on industry, though they lack the Victorian breadth of appeal and emphasis on showmanship – academic conferences tend to be dominated by slideshows and presentations, rather than dramatic demonstrations. Perhaps the most prominent and future-facing modern equivalent to the Victorian exhibition of industry is the Consumer Electronics Show, held since 1967 in the United States. Yet even this standout example only focuses on particular categories of industry, and is still largely catered towards attendees already interested in ‘tech’.

What is lacking is something like a CES, but for everything – taking the highlights of all of today’s specialist fairs and conferences, finding the best ways to make them as engaging and immersive as possible, and putting them all in the same space at the same time. Visitors to a new exhibition of industry would thus actually get to see drone deliveries in action, take rides in driverless cars, actually use the latest in virtual reality technology, play with prototype augmented reality devices, and see organ tissue and metals and electronics being 3D-printed in front of them. They would see industrial manufacturing robots in action, have a taste of lab-grown meat at the food stalls, meet cloned animals brought back from extinction, and themselves perform feats of extraordinary strength wearing the exoskeletons that are already in use in factories and warehouses. Visitors would naturally get to meet the inventors and scientists and engineers who developed it all, too. They would browse the latest in fashion, art, and architecture, seeing them alongside historical examples.

And the whole thing would be powered using only the cutting edge of clean energy technology, much like how the great new Corliss Engine drove the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, or how Westinghouse’s alternating current powered the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Visitors might also be able to view air CO₂ removal machines in action.

Why not just hold it online?

A live event provides a unique and immersive experience that cannot be replicated online. Being there in person allows people to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch the exhibits, which is especially vital for inspiring them. Seeing a picture on Instagram of a view from a skyscraper is just not the same as seeing it for oneself – the same applies to experiencing technologies. Being there is simply more visceral, and thus impactful – an essential quality when the aim of the exhibition is to inspire more people to become innovators.

In-person exhibitions can also reach beyond just first-adopters. An exhibition of industry aims to educate consumers about new technologies, but an online event risks being attended only by people who are already natural first-adopters, who are already digitally native or familiar with technologies like augmented reality.

These may well be core attendees of an in-person event, but the exhibition also needs to have a wider appeal if it is to educate consumers, exposing them to the unknown.

And then there is the unexpected. Attending a live event can provide opportunities for serendipity and discovery that are simply not possible with a digital event. For example, attendees may encounter unexpected exhibitions or demonstrations, or they may meet interesting people and make new connections. An attendee may attend in order to see a particular exhibit they are already interested in, but then be inspired by a completely different one. Although such serendipity is, in theory, possible online, it relies on the person browsing the internet to already have a certain openness to new ideas, or to be actively looking for them – and without the experience of discovery being so visceral.

Finally, there is a social aspect. Attending a live event provides a much more frictionless opportunity for people to socialise and connect with others. As the pandemic showed us, there are significant benefits to meeting and making connections in person than by communicating online – especially for those who are not fully digitally native. This aspect is especially important when it comes to the spread of the improving mentality. Such person-to-person inspiration seems to occur best when it happens in-person rather than through the written word or screens.

Attending a live event can also help to create a sense of community and shared experience among attendees. This can be especially powerful at large events, where people from different backgrounds and walks of life come together to share in a common experience. This is especially valuable when it comes to being able to say “I was there” for what may have been a first public demonstration of a cutting-edge technology, and helps in making any inspirational effects longer-lasting.

In order to spread innovation further, then, what we need are in-person events – ways for as many people as possible to experience and understand the development of the science and technology that creates the world around them. And to inspire them to join the effort too.

Is modern innovation actually suitable for display?

One frequently-made objection to holding a new exhibition of industry is that innovation just isn't that easy to display any more. In the nineteenth century, when there was so much improvement to machines and physical products, these could simply be displayed for visitors to see in action. Today, by contrast, a significant amount of scientific and technological improvement may only be impressive to visitors with a lot of detailed or specialist explanation. Improvements to many services, materials, quantum computing, and medical treatments, seem especially challenging to display so that non-specialist visitors can appreciate how big a deal they are.

This is certainly a challenge. But it is not an insurmountable one. For a start, the premise is incorrect. Many of today's innovations actually are very easy to display so as to be impressive. Virtual and augmented reality can easily be displayed by allowing visitors to try them out. Drone deliveries can likewise be shown just by seeing them in action, perhaps with a few short words of explanation as to their maximum battery life and other features. Innovations in AI or gaming or in software in general are frequently displayed tangibly at major industry fairs. Indeed, there is still significant improvement taking place in manufacturing, with ever-more sophisticated robots and industrial processes, as well as in consumer-facing services. A comprehensive exhibition of industry would also highlight improvement in food, beverages, household appliances, and aesthetic design, much like many industry-specific trades fairs.

As for the more challenging cases for display, however, it is simply a matter of exercising some creativity and imagination – something that may be encouraged by restricting exhibitors in how they are allowed to display their breakthroughs, along with some creative support on how to get around them. To illustrate, exhibitors might not be allowed to use slide presentations or short videos of their technologies in action, to ensure that they display something physical instead. Likewise, they might be given a very short maximum word count – say, 50 words total – for any written explanation at their stalls, so that they focus on communicating their breakthroughs as immersively and imaginatively as possible, underscoring the mantra that only seeing is believing. Although these restrictions may seem harsh, they would prevent the exhibition of industry from falling into two potential failure modes: that of becoming an overly academic, specialist conference on the one end, and that of becoming an insubstantial, superficial and buzzword-heavy display at the other.

At the same time, restrictions like these should be paired with some creative support from the exhibition's organising team. To take the example of displaying quantum computing, advances might be made more immediately impressive to visitors by having it race with a classical computer, perhaps by having them both attempt to solve an especially difficult problem. Although the public may not fully appreciate what is being solved, the key thing would be comparing the time they both take. A race automatically conveys drama and spectacle – not only between classical and quantum computers, but between different teams of quantum computer researchers – regardless of the finish line.

This is just a hypothetical example, and may not even be physically possible at the time of writing. But it shows how with some creativity and direction by the exhibition's organising team, the issue might be overcome. Teams of scientists and inventors may need additional guidance support from the exhibition's organising committee so as to come up with displays that will be sufficiently impressive to visitors – something that is likely to get easier with successive exhibitions, as exhibitors draw inspiration from previous ones and try to outdo what has already been done.

There is an important cautionary note to add. Support from an organising team can go too far, and lessen an exhibit's impact, if it results in the kind of over-curation that has affected many recent attempts at holding exhibition-like events. In order to avoid this, an exhibition of industry should have the organising principle that particular displays should not be allowed to convey abstract concepts or educative messages. Although the exhibition as a whole conveys a message about the importance of science and innovation – a kind of meta-message – this is conveyed by the experience of the exhibition being more than the sum of its parts. Exhibits should otherwise, as far as is possible, let the improvements speak for themselves. It is, for example, far more effective to conduct a taste test of meat substitutes compared to real meat, than to be told that it is innovative and read about its environmental advantages. And it is certainly more effective than viewing an art installation that purports to be about the general desirability of environmental sustainability. High-level, abstract displays should be strictly guarded against.

What role should government play?

Many historical exhibitions of industry were held by governments. The French national exhibitions of industry of the nineteenth century were funded from accumulated patent fees, with the idea that innovation would thus fund further innovation, with the results of intellectual property being exhibited, and the exhibitions in turn encouraging further investment in patentable improvements. When the exhibitions became international in 1851, those in France continued to be supported by governments, and governments remain heavily involved in the current World's Fairs.

There are, however, significant risks in having the government involved, and nor is it strictly necessary: many of the British exhibitions were organised and funded privately.

Governments must go through lengthy and potentially very wasteful tendering procedures – out of a need not to be seen to give unfair competitive advantages to private interests – in order to implement large-scale events on the scale of exhibitions, especially when it comes to building new infrastructure.

The involvement of taxpayer money can also lead to opposition from the public or special interest groups, on various potential grounds that are not always easy to predict – potential concerns related to the environment, ethics, equality, and commercialisation, are much more likely to be raised in opposition to a government project than a private one. The initial plans for what eventually became the UK's 2022 Unboxed events suffered from the get-go by having initially been thought of as a politically-charged "Festival of Brexit." Government-run or -organised exhibitions can be politicised, and unpredictably so, by whichever party is in power.

Broader government political aims, too, can interfere with the effective implementation of an exhibition. For example, politicians may be more likely to push for exhibitions to be held in towns or cities that have been politically or economically neglected, but which lack the appropriate infrastructure for an exhibition. One of the major mistakes of the early Olympic Games, such as that in St Louis in 1904, was that they were held in remote locations that athletes could not easily afford to go to. It is extremely important, especially when holding such an event for the first time in decades, to take advantage of the pre-existing convenience and capacity of large cities to handle large crowds.

Indeed, recent World's Fairs and similar mega-events like the Olympics frequently tend to justify the expenditure of taxpayer funds on the basis that they will create new infrastructure. These considerations hugely raise the cost and complexity of mega-events, and create further risks. Such infrastructure can be the cause of delays, cost overruns, and can very frequently fail to materialise or have the desired effects, thereby marring the event's reputation. One of the major reasons for the profitability and success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics was that it was largely free from these political expectations: the municipal government refused to fund it, and the organisers could ignore many of the costly requirements that would otherwise have been imposed by the International Olympic Committee because there were no other viable host cities to choose from. The games were almost entirely privately funded, other than some federal funding for security measures, leading to much better cost discipline, and a search for new revenue streams such as broadcasting rights and corporate sponsorship.

The current World's Fairs also demonstrate how with too much government involvement, there is a significant risk that an exhibition would descend into a highly curated infotainment event, sanitised of any associations with particular businesses or entrepreneurs. Governments, after all, have to be especially careful not to be seen to play favourites, which they generally achieve by creating onerous and bureaucratic processes to protect themselves from this criticism, and by downplaying any ways in which businesses might be seen to have been given an unfair advantage.

A true exhibition of industry, however, must allow businesses to present their own achievements without onerous bureaucratic restrictions, and thus benefit from the advertising that exhibiting at such an event would bring. Indeed, without this draw, it is unlikely that businesses will invest in sending in exhibits or investing in making them sufficiently engaging or inspiring to the public. This is not to say that government involvement would automatically cause all of these problems, but that it brings considerable risks that must be carefully considered and mitigated.

What form should the organising body take?

Historically, the ideal form for a privately-funded exhibition of industry appears to be that of a company limited by guarantee – a corporate form that still exists in the UK, but which can also be engineered within a more typical corporate structure.

The Great Exhibition of 1851, for example, albeit organised under the direction of a Royal Commission to give it official credibility while maintaining some arms-length distance from the government, was privately financed. It initially tried attracting up-front subscription funding – similar to modern-day crowdfunding – but this largely failed. It thus instead appealed for guarantors, who would pay nothing if the event made a surplus, and would only be liable to pay the amounts they set down proportional to any deficit. Based on the accumulated guarantee fund, the organisers thus obtained a bank loan to cover the costs of the exhibition. And because the exhibition generated a surplus, the loan was repaid and the guarantors were not called upon to pay anything at all.

Within the UK in particular, using a company limited by guarantee to organise an exhibition would provide the benefit of raising funds using a guarantee fund, as well as providing potential eligibility to register as a charity, with many of the benefits that that would bring in terms of public credibility and cost-saving implications (subject to how the articles of association affected the distribution of any profits made by the company). Such a company would be owned by its guarantors rather than shareholders.

An alternative possibility, if some government involvement is deemed necessary for credibility, is to take advantage of a more official corporate form. In the UK this might be to obtain a royal charter, such as that used for the Royal Commission of the Great Exhibition of 1851, or for the organising body to be constituted by Act of Parliament. To obtain such a corporate form, however, the organisers would need to be sufficiently politically connected already, and the risks associated with political distraction outlined above might increase.

Regardless, it is important that an exhibition be able to generate its own revenue, through ticket sales, parking charges (the higher the better, following the example of the Los Angeles 1984 Olympics, in order to dissuade people from congesting the roads around an exhibition and getting them to use pre-existing public transport infrastructure), corporate sponsorship deals, and the selling of broadcasting rights – something that might be tied into the awarding of prizes for the best exhibits in various categories. As much as possible, exhibitions of industry should aim to be treated like major sporting events – Olympic Games, Formula 1 races, or FIFA World Cups, but for science and industry. Indeed, in this respect the exhibition would serve as a major publicity-booster for innovation prizes or the use of awards to honour innovators, allowing the prizes or awards to piggy-back off the public attention devoted to the exhibition itself.

How should the exhibition be laid out?

This is one of the thorniest issues to address. Traditionally, exhibitions of industry tended to be split up according to their subject matter, for example with separate sections devoted to science, art, education, agriculture, other raw materials, machinery, and manufactures, usually with country- or region-specific pavilions too. In the twentieth century some began to break with this tradition, with the 1939 New York World's Fair for example being organised according to the realms that people came into contact with in their ordinary lives: transportation, production and distribution, food, communications, medicine, science, and community interests. Since then, many World's Fairs have become all the more tied to broader themes, and divorced from the original intentions of exhibitions as showcases of industry.

There should certainly be some element of curation, but as far as possible a modern exhibition of industry should be allowed to be a discovery process in and of itself. For example, it would likely be very advantageous to work with existing industry-specific trade fair organisers, having their representatives sit on advisory sub-committees that would suggest the most impressive and interesting exhibitors from their individual industry fairs from the previous few years. From these, an overall organising committee would then be able to see what the advances of the last few years are, and come up with the most interesting and engaging visitor experience based on what the various industries of a country or the world have actually been doing.

Given the exhibition's status as an industry fair but for everything, engaging existing industry-specific trade fair organisers as advisers would also make it easier to coordinate the ideal timing of an overall exhibition of industry, and draw on their experience and expertise in putting together large events – but with ultimate responsibility for choosing exhibits lying with the overall organising committee. It is very likely that the exhibition will be organised according to the products or services that people come into contact with, but with these used as an opportunity to showcase how those products and services are actually produced. A section on eating and drinking, for example, might showcase the most impressive advances in agricultural equipment and techniques, as well as novel foodstuffs and dishes for the public to try.

What should the exhibition *look* like?

An exhibition of industry must ultimately appeal to a visiting public that is much wider than just those people already interested in how things are made. It must cater to the broadest possible demographic, so that their exposure to the science and inventions on display can inspire those not already inspired. To do this, exhibitions have relied on the sheer spectacle of having a novel and impressive building for the public to view.

In 1851 in London this was the Crystal Palace: then the largest enclosed space in the world, and a gleaming structure of glass at a time when most other buildings in the city were of soot-stained brick. In 1889 in Paris this was the Eiffel Tower – the then tallest structure in the world. Even for less successful World's Fairs, like Brussels in 1958, the most enduringly popular attraction was and is the Atomium – a building-sized model of an iron crystal with a commanding view of the rest of the exhibition. Similar might be said of the Millennium Dome and London Eye, which were and continue to be key attractions in London.

Having an especially interesting structure – even if it is just an entrance-way or functions as a platform of some kind, rather than housing the exhibition as a whole – is thus essential to creating a draw for the public at large. Given the multiplicity of structures that have already been built using newer materials like steel, glass, and concrete, it may be especially impressive to use a more traditional material but in a very unusual way – for example to create a wooden, cathedral-like structure, along the lines of those designed by E. Fay Jones or Kengo Kuma.

This would show that the extraordinary feats of the past can be both emulated and even superseded. The assembly itself might be treated as a ticketed event, for example if it were largely pre-fabricated and aimed at breaking a world record for the quickest assembly of such a large structure. It could be designed around the idea that building quickly and at budget is something that is still possible today, emulating many of the lessons from the Crystal Palace, assembled in under seven months, or the Empire State Building, erected in just eleven. It might also showcase new techniques, for example by using artificial intelligence in the design process to save on materials, involving robots and 3D-printing in its assembly, and being powered by the latest in energy technology – an essential feature for the exhibition as a whole.

As for the permissions and financing of such a structure, the lesson from previous exhibitions of industry is that there are a range of options. In terms of permissions, it may be necessary to insist that the structure is only temporary. If it succeeds in capturing the public's imagination, then local politicians or business interests will almost certainly attempt to keep it permanent and even purchase it, providing additional funds for the exhibition and any repeat attempts. This happened with the Millennium Eye, the Crystal Palace, and the Atomium, all of which were only supposed to be temporary. An agreement might also be reached with the company chosen to design and construct it, whereby they would foot most or all of the up-front costs in exchange for a share of the ticket proceeds – much like the agreement that Gustave Eiffel made for his Tower. There are a range of possibilities, all of which should be geared solely towards building something quickly that is as visually stunning and unusual as possible.

Conclusion

A new exhibition of industry would inspire innovation and foster a culture of improvement among not just frontier entrepreneurs, but the general population. By showcasing the latest advancements and innovations across a range of industries, such an exhibition would expose people to the latest technological advances and inspire them to pursue innovation themselves. It would provide a platform for innovators to showcase their efforts and network with other like-minded individuals, creating a fertile ground for collaboration and new ideas.

Innovation sits at the heart of all economic progress, increasing our living standards and equipping us to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing our society – from climate change to healthcare. An exhibition which actively promotes and encourages innovation, therefore, should be seen as an indispensable tool in the pursuit of such progress.

The Entrepreneurs Network is a think tank for Britain's most ambitious entrepreneurs, with an aim to make Britain the best country in which to start and grow a business.

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