

[Achievement Unlocked]

Welcome to the blue box.

A red box lies behind you on the ground, crushed and defeated. You stand quietly, reflecting on the journey that has brought you this far, and then walk boldly toward the cool light that glows ahead. Welcome to the blue box.

You have reached a plateau few will ever see. Yet instead of pride, your face holds only grim determination. The narrow path ahead is far steeper than the road behind. Those who challenge the blue box do so not to test the box.

They come to test themselves.

Think you're ready? Turn this card over to get started.

While every red box is the same, every blue box is different because every idea and every innovator is different. Where the red box had 6 levels, the blue box has only 4. The tasks it contains are both more difficult and less prescribed than before.

Your idea has leveled up. And so have you.

[The Blue Box]

Assemble. 1

Assemble your advisory board. These are the supporters, domain experts, and decision makers who can help make your idea a reality.

Identify. 2

Work with your board to agree on the most significant risks or unknowns standing between you and funding your idea.

Experiment. 3

Devise and run an experiment to generate the data your board needs to answer their questions and concerns. Iterate steps 2 and 3 as needed.

Green light. 4

Make it real. The blue box is only conquered when your idea receives the funding and resources necessary to become a shipping project

Complete the actions below and then proceed to level 1.

- Schedule a regular call with a Kickbox mentor.
- Meet with your Kickbox mentor to create your plan of attack.

Team, Assemble!

Forming your board of advisors

Your first step is to assemble a blue box advisory board. This is the group who will guide your activity from now on. Usually, your sponsor is your first board member.

Your board needs to include the people who can provide the resources and credibility needed to transform your idea from an investigation project to a fully realized shipping product. This means recruiting one or more executives in your domain, and maybe technical experts and other influential members of the organization.

At a minimum, board members need to commit to meeting with you once per month to provide feedback on your progress and guide your ongoing investigation. Right now they are interested in your project. It's your job to turn that **interest** into **endorsement**.

How many people should be on your board? As many as you need. Blue box boards have been as small as one, but most are two or three people.

Complete the actions below and then proceed to level 2.

- Work with your Kickbox mentor to make a targeted list of board candidates.
- Form your board by securing commitments from necessary members.

Risk Hunting

Working with your board

The validation data you created while working on your red box was intriguing enough that your sponsor wanted to know more. Now that you have your board assembled, your number one job is to figure out *exactly* what “knowing more” means.

Meet with your board to discuss your project’s risks and unknowns. Come to an agreement with them on which are the scariest and should be tested first. One way to approach this is to ask your board:

“What is the number one question on your minds that is keeping you from giving this project a green light right now?”

After they agree on what’s number one, work with the board to agree on what data would answer that question. If additional resources are necessary to generate that data, talk to your board about who will provide them.

Then it’s time to go back into mad scientist mode.

Complete the actions below and then proceed to level 3.

- Schedule your first board meeting. Invite your Kickbox mentor.
- Come to consensus with your board on the biggest risk or uncertainty and what data would answer that question.
- Secure the necessary resources to create an experiment that will generate that data.

Experimentation

Gathering blue box data

It's time to get your lab coat back on and channel your inner scientist once again. It's time for experimentation! Your goal is to find the cheapest, fastest way to generate non-biased data to answer the questions and doubts your advisory board has posed.

Unlike in the red box, there is no map for the terrain you find yourself in. Every project has different questions that require creative experiments. Just remember that you're trying to measure *actual behavior*, not just ask about *predicted behavior*. If you get stuck, talk to your Kickbox mentor about example experiment types.

Don't try to make a single experiment that answers all your questions. Keep your experiments small and focused so that each one can inform the next. And remember that a negative result should also be celebrated. In fact, you and your board should be very suspicious of bias if all your experiments come back the way you expect!

As you complete each experiment, share the data with your advisory board and repeat step 2 as needed.

Complete the actions below and then proceed to level 4.

- Design and run an experiment to generate the data your advisory board wants.

- Share your data with the board, and work with them to decide whether to repeat step 2 with new questions or if they are ready to proceed to step 4.

The Green Light

The blue box finish line

The fourth and final blue box level is simple. But it's also harder than all the rest combined because it includes all the steps that came before.

Your blue box is complete when your project receives the funding and resources necessary to become a shipping project and moves into the company's standard product lifecycle planning.

Your innovation journey is complete. Few dare to test themselves against the challenges this path inevitably brings. Fewer still can say they made it to the end. Take a moment to savor the victory.

After all, your next innovation is waiting. And so is a fresh red box with your name on it.

Complete the actions below to finish the blue box.

- Generate the data necessary to gain your board's endorsement and get your project into the organization's release pipeline.
- Celebrate the completion of your innovation journey and enjoy a toast with the Kickbox team.
- Take a breather... and start contemplating what your next red box will be!