Innovation Inertia and Flow

The organization of innovation

"Innovation is difficult to realize but Innovation Inertia can become history. Boards of management do now have access to a program with the Janus switch. They can direct to the forefront those who are able to create room for innovation"

Herman Hoving

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Background and headlines

How can we organize innovation? An everlasting question in all boardrooms if one realizes that it is not only a matter of R&D. In abstract the answer to this question is provided by the American innovation professor Andrew van de Ven who defines innovation management as follows: *'to bring ideas into good currency within an institutional context'*. This requires a company broad *'readiness to innovation'*: the whole organization must be prepared to recognize and to exploit opportunities. While daily business goes on! This comes down to an Odyssey that can be brought to a successful conclusion by the Progress Pantheon presented hereafter. *

The Odyssey with the Progress Pantheon entails a comprehensive model and a program to obtain the required organizational readiness to innovation. On board room level it provides the instruments to switch on at the right moment and to lead innovation. The accompanying training with workshops teaches employees to recognize opportunities for innovation and gives them the necessary confidence. In this way innovation is made repeatable. The entire program is based on the recognition of the Innovation Paradoxes and the existence of various schools for innovation. This is prerogative to the successful organization of innovation. Therefore, it is useful to first introduce the paradoxes and strategy schools for a good understanding of a program aimed at the organization of innovation. Here the Odyssey begins !

Why organization wide?

Innovation can be characterized by three paradoxes: The Control Paradox, the Time Paradox and the Knowledge Paradox.

The Control Paradox means organizing innovation comes down to the external control chance. Innovation, however, is a random process: it is unknown in advance which direction it will be going. It is like throwing an honest dice and wanting to organize in advance that the outcome is a 6, the maximum result.

The Time paradox practically means time is always short for innovation. If a company is performing well, all energy is focused on growth, the opening of new branches and production lines or tapping into new markets. If, on the other hand, people get into heavy weather, the need for innovation becomes acute and there never is enough time.

To outline the whole picture: A management in trouble is under tremendous time pressure to come up with innovation. So, the need for control will be intense, because short-term results are of great importance. However, the creative process will suffer from control and nothing will come out. The lack of result urges the manager to exercise more control, with even less innovation initiative as a result. A reflex that virtually no manager can evade. In other words, the Control Paradox and the Time Paradox will paralyze the organization.

The Knowledge Paradox, finally, means a lot of knowledge and information is available, but it is difficult to use the right knowledge at the right time. These three paradoxes are major causes of Innovation Inertia.

An organization wide approach to innovation as part of the day-to-day operations is the only way to circumvent the Control Paradox and Time Paradox. In order to realize innovative and promising results the right mindset is required in an organization, top to bottom. The solution of the Knowledge Paradox also is hidden in that mindset. Essentially it requires a replacement of knowledge transfer by knowledge *creation* and knowledge *sharing*. Innovatively throwing dice - recognizing a six when it falls - is a skill that can be trained.

Configuration buttons

The fact so many innovations have been absorbed by the innovation paradoxes is not so much about bad management, but more about unfamiliarity with the phenomenon and inability to solve the innovation problems at hand.

The pioneering book 'Strategy *Safari* ' (2008) promises to be a complete guide through the 'jungle' of strategic management of innovation. Elsewhere a road from the 'innovation swamp' is proposed. Unfortunately, it is also the scientists themselves who were cutting their way through the jungle trying to detach themselves from the suction of the swampy marsh of scientific facts and sub-studies. Furthermore, many innovation experts initially were very impressed by the world shakers, the radical innovators who brought about revolutions in the sense of Schumpeter's 'creative destruction'. Splendid, but not useful or applicable at board level where continuity, employment and a reasonably predictable dividend payment are paramount. Moreover, most innovations are not revolutionary and therefore do not require world shakers at all.

The innovation science is a still young discipline that has gained insights since the sixties of the last century. This initially led to the creation of different 'Schools': The Positioning School, the Cognitive School, the Planning School, the Design School, the Entrepreneurial School, the Environmental School, the Cultural School, the Learning School and finally the Political School. Many of these schools originated as a result of specific business cases. In the eighties for example, Philips in Eindhoven developed an unsurpassed video system, the VCR recorder. However, it took so long to bring this system to the market that competitor Sony had already conquered the world market by the technically less advanced VHS system. And look at it: the Design school - a dominant R&D approach - got lost and the Entrepreneurial School of innovation was born.

All these schools on their own have provided useful knowledge. Many interventions and programs on this basis have proved successful. Isolated from each other, however, they are not suitable for an organization-wide approach to innovation.

It is the Progress Pantheon that offers this perspective. It is a dynamic model originating from the tenth school, the Configuration School, in which all schools have found their setting in a flow model. This school and this model have also been developed by the authors of the Strategy Safari.

A very attractive advantage of the Progress Pantheon is its practical applicability. In the boardroom one can turn the buttons of the configuration. Within the model there is a timeline for the innovation school that must have the upper hand. It also helps to determine which help lines can best be called. Moreover, an essential element is that the dynamics of the model indicate when it is possible to switch between the targeted results of the process on the one hand and the creative moments on the other. Whereas previously, from the boardroom, innovation could hardly be grasped, the Progress Pantheon does provide very clear handles. Or, when something unexpectedly threatens to occur, it will provide the framework for analysing what is going wrong and what can be done to fix it. The solution lies in the Janus time switch introduced in the next section.

The Janus time switch

The Progress Pantheon owns debt to the Configuration school of Mintzberg c. s. described in the Strategy Safari and the 'Gods of Management' of Charles Handy. Handy demonstrates with help of the gods Zeus, Athena, Apollo and Dionysus from Greek mythology the cultural choices to be made for better business performance and a good work climate.

Athena stands for the task-oriented culture and is focused on results. In her view the organization of innovation then is a step wise decision-making process along lines of vision building and goalsetting.

Zeus is the spider in the organization web. He stands for the power-oriented culture that forms the basis for leadership and influence.

Dionysus stands for the person-oriented culture formed by the members of the organization and their values. To be successful on the innovation path values as intuition, empathy, creativity and courage are paramount.

Apollo stands for the role-oriented culture by focus on organizational roles and functional departments such as production, sales and marketing and R&D in the fore front when innovation is required.

Three gods from Greek mythology are added in the Progress Pantheon. Kronos who stands for the chronological time that defines beginning and end of a project for example. Therefore, Kronos and Athena go hand in hand. The Greek god Kairos stands for the right time or the right moment to act. Kairos therefore is connected to all sexy innovation moments such as the creative flash of insight.

Finally, Janus stands for renewal (think of the first month of each new year: January). He bears two faces and is the gate keeper of the Pantheon. In the Progress Pantheon Janus bears Kronos' face on the one side and Kairos' face on the other. In this way Janus is the time switch in the Progress Pantheon, the switch between chronological time and the right time. Ideally Janus solves the Time Paradox by demonstrating different sides of his face and ever so also a part of the Control Paradox. This god - Janus- orchestrates the gods of management in the right way in the innovation process. By this configurative approach the board of management rules and lets the other figures who organize innovation shine in their roles.

The Progress Pantheon

These two gods oversee the innovation process: Athena and Zeus. Athena thrives innovation by organizing progress in the decision-making process. She defines tasks and as tasks are limited in time Athena teams up with Kronos, god of chronological time. It is Athena's turn as soon as Janus shows his face of Kronos.

Zeus on the contrary is coupled to Kairos. It is Zeus's turn as soon as Janus shows his face of Kairos. He influences innovation in a pro-active way by inspiring, goalsetting and forcing at the right moment. Remarkably use of force is not popular and seldom recognized in training situations. However, Zeus often is a harsh ruler. To enforce acts certainly is part of his repertoire. And sometimes this is what innovation needs to make it irreversible.

Paramount to a smooth innovation process is the collaboration between Athena and Zeus, a good switch between Kronos and Kairos. Once Athena and Zeus start competing an innovation process soon will degenerate into ordinary deadlines and go/no go decisions and a bitter fight over ideas, time and power.

Whenever an innovation process will come totally under the influence of Kronos and Athena any initiative will be killed to keep the process controllable and manageable. In Greek mythology Kronos had the nasty habit to swallow his children and the same might happen in an innovation process under his influence. Participants in the process will become very obsessed by time pressure and meeting targets they will go down. Sub goals will become goals on their own lacking any relation to the big picture.

It will be Apollo's task to mobilize strategic roles that have to be fulfilled. These are the roles of the planner and the knowledge manager to mention a few. It is to the merit of the configurative approach that they can be supported by teachers, politicians and culture managers. Finally, Dionysus will make values like intuition and creativity flourish and Janus will orchestrate all participants in a proper way.

Strategy, tactics and operations

The Progress Pantheon can be trained by innovation workshops. Of utmost importance will be the integration of organizational readiness into the corporate culture. Each organization member needs to get the experience to deliver his or her significant contribution to the innovation process. The collective learning process will be realized in the World Café. Finally the enterprise will be fully prepared for innovation and will have the confidence to accomplish the Odyssey any time. Then innovation is made repeatable.

But first the board of management is on the strategic move to determine the direction of the innovation process. They have to set a proper agenda for the innovation workshops. They also will develop a heuristic innovation model to be deployed in the workshops. Herman Hoving (Panta Psychologie) and Ruud Heyblom (Marketing Koers) will help.

Program

Foregoing has resulted in an appealing and active program to organize company renewal. An Odyssey that can be fulfilled in three steps:

1. Generation of innovation models and creation of a tailor-made model
2. Training in the application of the model makes innovation manageable.
3. Incorporation of lessons learnt in the steady business leads to organizational readiness to innovation and preferred innovation outcomes. Organization members now are able bring ideas into good currency. Innovation Inertia will be replaced by Flow and innovation becomes repeatable.

We will be happy to share the details of the full program as well as the unique approach to renewal based on knowledge creation in a personal encounter.

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References

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Gods of management by Handy.
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Herman Hoving, *Panta Psychologie*, June 2019