Introduction to Part II: Creative Entrepreneurship

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We have divided this handbook and our framework for thinking about management and creativity into four parts. The first part focuses on innovation. The second part focuses on entrepreneurship. In reality, it can be hard to separate innovative and entrepreneurial activity. It has been suggested to us that a strategic innovation framework called ‘The Six Degrees of Innovation’, which we developed in a book called *Creative Strategy: Reconnecting business and innovation* (Bilton and Cummings 2010), is as much about entrepreneurship as it is about innovation. Indeed, the fourth ‘degree’ or element of that Six Degrees framework was called ‘market innovation’, which is quite close to our definition of entrepreneurship. We developed this definition by going back to the etymological roots of the word. From the greater Oxford English Dictionary, ‘entrepreneur’ is a French word and was originally applied to: ‘a. The director or manager of a public musical institution; b. One who ‘gets up’ entertainments, esp. musical performances.’ (Recognising the origins of the word caused many Francophiles to criticise the comment made, allegedly, by George W. Bush to Tony Blair during a trade summit that ‘The problem with the French is that they don’t have a word for entrepreneur.’)

That original, simple understanding of the entrepreneur as somebody who successfully brings something, or ‘gets something up’, to the market is a useful one, indicating the close link between developing an innovation and taking it to prospective users in the context of management and creativity: creating one without managing the other will add little of lasting value.

Looking back, many of the examples that we provided in *Creative Strategy* for market innovation or entrepreneurship came from the music industry. In particular, we focused on how the nature of that industry (and subsequently other industries), and how value was created and paid for, was changed by pioneers such as Radiohead, who, instead of attempting to protect their traditional business from the Internet, embraced it and began to offer music online freely, for whatever people felt like paying for it. They were ahead of their time in recognising that the way innovations were brought to, and paid for by, the market would be changed by
advances in technology. Recorded music would increasingly be seen by
many as an advertisement for other revenue-generating products that
could not be transferred virtually, such as concert tickets, clothes and
other associated merchandise. And other companies in other industries
have learned from the example of musical artists like Radiohead to think
differently about how they bring their products and services to market.

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that those cutting-edge entrepre-
neurial developments in the music industry happened nearly a decade ago.
So what has followed on from them? An excellent recent example is the
latest ‘album’ from Beck, titled *Song Reader*. Released on 11 December
2012, *Song Reader* is not a recorded compilation of tracks. It is a book of
sheet music for 20 Beck compositions with an open invitation for people
to record their interpretations of the songs. Anyone can submit a song as
a YouTube video or in the form of a SoundCloud file. Almost every song
submitted appears on Beck’s SongReader.net site, which, just a couple of
weeks after *Song Reader*’s release, contained hundreds of different ver-
sions of the songs. Many exhibited dramatically different interpretations
of the same sheet music.

The project is a mix of old and new, it is essentially an old-fashioned
sheet music book, but what *Song Reader* has become would not have been
technologically possible just a few years ago. According to Jordan Bass,
from McSweeney’s Books, who worked with Beck on the project and
published the book: ‘This neat thing happened, as the book was evolving –
we were getting farther away from the golden age of song sheets that
inspired a lot of the style and tone for this, but we were also getting into
this moment of audiences knowing how to engage with something that’s
asking them to reinvent it’ (Berkman 2013). Is it a book, an album, some-
thing else or all three? In ‘management-speak’, Beck’s crowdsourcing of
his own album via new social media platforms while transgressing tradi-
tional industry categories reversed the relationship between producer and
consumer, making his fans ‘co-producers’ of the album. At the same time,
crowd-sourcing also works as a traditional marketing strategy, reinforcing
brand loyalty (most of the participants will no doubt buy the album as
well) and brand image (Beck is a serious artist who writes his own songs).

As Bass concludes: ‘The thing that’s been neat to me is that [Song
Reader] was never about running away from the Internet, or from the
ways people interact with new music now . . . [It] came out of Beck realize-
ing there was room to engage with his audience in all kinds of different
ways. To me, it’s very cool to see these things coexist – this ink-and-paper,
pre-recording medium and the streaming-video world.’

Are Beck and his team innovators or entrepreneurs? Are they explorers
seeking new ways of creating value, or exploiters of existing resources,
as the strategy literature might put it? They are both, and as such this is a good example to highlight how effective creation often requires the combined focus on creativity and discovery that drives innovation and the diligence and dilettantism that feeds entrepreneurship.

Mindful of this need to connect rather than separate innovation and entrepreneurship as a means of starting something that could create value and last, the first chapter in this Creative Entrepreneurship section of the handbook goes to quite some lengths to demonstrate that thinking that the job of managing creativity is done once good innovations are achieved is a mistake. Stephen Cummings, Margaret Maile Petty and Ben Walker (one business school academic, one design school academic and one practitioner) look again at a study done a few years ago that seemed to show that winning awards for innovative design led to increases in a firm’s share price. They raise questions about the validity of this study. Across the four markets that they investigated, only in one (the United States) could anything that could be taken to be an increase in share price be found. And, even here it was almost negligible and skewed by one firm in particular. That firm is Apple, a company that during the period of the study’s focus (2001–10) had Steve Jobs – perhaps the best embodiment of an innovator and an entrepreneur in one package. This chapter, ‘Innovation is not the only thing’, suggests that these findings should make us wary of believing that innovation, in and of itself, or indeed any one ‘silver bullet’, is all that the management of creativity requires.

Chris Bilton’s chapter, ‘Learning to fail: lessons from Happenstance’, likewise considers entrepreneurship as the motivating force behind innovation. The chapter draws on the Happenstance Project, a case study of...
technologists in residence in three UK arts organisations, and explores the beliefs and motivations on both sides which drove entrepreneurial behaviour during the residencies. ‘Trait-based’ theories of entrepreneurship have fallen out of academic fashion, but entrepreneurial businesses continue to be very dependent on the personality and beliefs of the individual entrepreneur. In this case, attitudes to failure and risk were as important as self-belief and commitment. Contrary to the stereotype of the entrepreneur as highly motivated and ‘diligent’, Happenstance’s success depended on a willingness to fail and to learn from failure. Self-doubt and compromise were necessary counterparts to self-belief and determination, and the technologists and arts organisations were able to complement and learn from each other.

Kate Oakley’s chapter ‘Good work? Rethinking cultural entrepreneurship’ builds on this notion of examining entrepreneurship at the micro or individual rather than organisational level and cleverly rethinks the conventional notion of the entrepreneur as an individual who makes a conscious decision to be entrepreneurial. She argues that cultural entrepreneurs are often innovative people who have no choice but to be entrepreneurial; entrepreneurship is a necessary output for their innovative impulse. There is a disconnection here between the political rhetoric of entrepreneurship, which frames creative industries policies in the UK, and the reality of ‘forced’ or ‘adaptive’ entrepreneurship in which many young people find themselves. The paradox of forced entrepreneurship is the gap between a dream of autonomy and the reality of self-exploitation. The ‘good work’ of the chapter’s title describes a sub-set of young cultural entrepreneurs who justify their experience of precarious employment and ‘voluntary poverty’ by setting the ethical, social and aesthetic benefits against the economic costs. While such a lifestyle might be available only to a relatively privileged few, there may be opportunities here for rethinking the purpose of work and the models of organisation in which ‘good work’ can thrive.

The final chapter in this section considers ‘entrepreneuring’ as an active process. Chris Steyaert’s chapter uses the fictional case of unemployed steel workers in Sheffield from the film The Full Monty to show how entrepreneurs move from an initial phase of ‘wandering around’, immersing themselves in the experiences around them to sense new possibilities, then picking up and working on the new entrepreneurial possibility through an iterative process of hard work and rehearsal. Finally the entrepreneurs take their entrepreneurial venture out into the world again and challenge the old ways of seeing (risking ridicule, but also turning expectations upside down). Chris’s framework – summarised as ‘AH / AHA / HAHA’ – draws on Koestler’s Act of Creation and expands on Koestler’s theory of bisociation which underpins the book as a whole.
REFERENCES

