



Final Conference

"Create to Innovate"

Successful methodologies and experiences

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Beyond paradigms

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Which characteristics do innovators have?

I'm not a sociologist, neither a mass media expert, therefore I'm not able to give a correct answer for the birth of the phenomenon "innovator", but, as I deal with innovation, I try to point out with you some considerations on some characteristics real innovators have, characteristics I have noticed during a business survey carried out for 25 years.

Let's define a little common vocabulary which will assist us across the whole article, since usually the idea is synonym of discovery, invention, creation.

The discovery is the individuation of an element of great interest from a scientific point of view, or of new social, economic or cultural perspectives. Discovering means finding out something which you didn't know before, but which already existed.

The invention is the individuation of a functional solution to a need. It is the rational settlement of intuitions concerning the achievement of a new tool. Normally it refers to concrete creativity products.

The creation is a product from scratch, that is the innovative animation of an already existing element, it commonly indicates an artistic product.

A further fundamental concept must be added to these three aspects: fantasy, that I like to define, borrowing a sentence of Bruno Munari's: "Everything that wasn't before even if unfeasible".

Fantasy is oddness, strangeness, fiction, escape from reality, inspiration. It is wandering with the mind, following different images in discontinuous and abstract way. It is the wish of getting out of the traditional schemes, as free from contingent needs. In the field of creativity, fantasy is in fact the faculty that allows to think things which were not existing before, without worrying about checking if what you are thinking about is really new.

This is exactly the central point of my contribution.

Most of us spends a long period in the spheres of negation: I don't think we can learn a lot if we always trigger all the defence mechanisms against a new idea. By doing so, we close the doors to growth and we'll have more difficulties to design our future. The "innovators", contrariwise, are able to recognize the uncertainty and to live together with it, admit errors, even better, approve them, recognize the ambiguity of their own role and of the situation and learn to live in. Basically, an "innovator" is who has been able to break the reference schemes, the mental paradigms. The "innovator" sees beyond and is not conditioned by

the filters that make us frame the reality just in a single way. I believe that often our will of not doing is linked to not being willing to question us, to risk: not doing is easier.

The “innovator” doesn’t look for excuses for not acting: he acts and breaks the scheme. If this is a prerogative of hers/him, can we, common mortals, have hope? Of course: we live in a context and we manage some processes. I can verify exactly from observations made on dozens of successful industrial cases how much acting on ourselves (working on motivation), on context (favouring the quality of the environment where we work) and in the processes (using methods/techniques appropriate for creativity development) counts.

But all this is not enough: a lot of discipline, application and method is needed. I had the opportunity to know and speak with Ferran Andria, the Catalan cook who has literally revolutionised the cooking, encouraging the most inedited and daring gustative combination, changing radically the structure of the dishes. Even in his case I realise how much his strength is the method for the creative process: his books aren’t books of recipes, but methodological treatises, almost philosophical, on creative organization.

These ones are without doubts innovators who has already in their DNA the “seed” of paradox and provocation. We need to train and to exercise: all the things that are interesting and new happen always at the borders of the phenomena, of the chaos.

I’ve been inspired by Santa Fé Institute (USA): complexity is the science of the emergence. In a complex system, the sum of the parts, put together, creates an unity that has new properties which the single parts don’t have. These properties emerge only when the phenomenon is studied in its totality. We must then exercise to be able to read the weak signals, but above all to correlate unusual perspectives and question constantly the convictions on usual practices, substantially a more inter-disciplinary approach.

To approach th innovatot we must be more primitive and more acculturated, more destructive and more constructive, more crazy and more wise than other.

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