

MARKETING & SALES

HSM – World Business Forum 2009: new horizons in management innovation and creativity

The World Business Forum, organized by HSM every year, represents a window on our world. The sixth edition of the event was held at the FieraMilanoCity exhibition center in Milan (Italy) on the 28th and 29th of October 2009. Seminars were held by distinguished notoriety like Bill Clinton, Nobel Peace Prize winner Rajendra Pachauri; Gary Hamel, guru in Business Strategy; Lyn Heward, Creative Director of Cirque Du Soleil; Jim Collins, Management Expert; and by the talented, enterprising Jean-Claude Biver, CEO of Hublot Watches. Over 1800 participants coming from Italian and foreign companies from every sector of business were there to attend and take part during speeches on current themes related to management, innovation and, obviously, new prospects for the future.

Maura Leonardi

In many respects 2009 has been a difficult year which has coincided with a negative economic situation and consequently bringing about numerous changes in the industrial sector. Reorganization, staff reductions, changes in management and other organizational turbulence, have in many cases upset company stability in some way, therefore placing the accent on major necessities in order to reshape and consider new management styles.

GARY HAMEL, THE GURU OF INNOVATION, defined by Fortune magazine as “the world’s leading expert in business strategy”, focussed his speech on innovation not only seen in a technical environment, but also in company organization. This is a concept which is still unknown today, but of vital importance for the revival of some companies. Implementing new management has become essential and inevitable if we want to look at our future with confidence.

Companies face two main challenges today: the first is a reorganization phase where it is necessary to reconsider having a management style that is able to keep up with times by monitoring the progress of human knowledge; the other is related to the frenzy of modern day, to the fast and frenetic changes of our external conditions. The first challenge is a possible problem and it concerns the situation companies focus on.

After analysing the period of time starting from 1860 to present day, Gary Hamel made it a point to underline how bored management is today. Managing people and consequently companies has come to a standstill. Exponential growth in recent years has led management to the point where they must consider and restructure a new management style. Up until a few years ago, people were the life blood of companies, the element that defined the structure of an organization. We later evidenced a change of flow where companies tried to turn human values into robots by weighing down on structures with bureaucratic instruments and slowing down growth rather than looking for adequate ones for future development. Since people didn’t feel they belonged to the organization, they didn’t take part actively in company life and therefore created structural and organizational problems. The second challenge to face is brought about by the society we live in, where we are overburdened by excessive agitation.

IN OUR SOCIETY, “SPEED” IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR SYSTEM; everything is fast: our private and professional lives undergo intense paces; change has become a rule so it is important to keep up with times in order not to be cut out and miss any opportunity. A situation that influences company life may be put by asking the question: how can we build a company that is able to change as quickly as what surrounds it? We must examine and change our business management. When a radical change occurs, in addition to the crisis it may incur, it also becomes a challenge for the future. Changes surely determine a break down, but they shouldn’t always be seen as negative. Google is an excellent example of a company that is continuously changing and living through present-day, but also anticipating the future. An innovative company reality in which Eric Schmidt strongly believes in the evolution of species as a philosophy of life: “Our strategy is to have more at bat per unit of time and efforts than anyone else in the world. People who work for Google constantly have new, strong and bold objectives to reach.” Their theory 70/20/10 allows them to research and to always come up with new concepts: 70% resources; 20% inventions; 10% new ideas.

TODAY, CHANGE CAN BE COMPARED TO A HIGH SPEED TRAIN. Competition is at our doors. In the past there were only very few ways of passing on information and these were slow; they didn’t ensure that information would be as diffused as it is today, so as a result of this, clients were not as well informed. Nowadays, continuous innovation is the key to beating competition which is becoming more and more aggressive and always around the corner.

Innovation isn't accepted by people, so how can we build a company where innovation becomes an integral part of every single person's working life?

With regards to this, eloquent is the example that W.L. Gore founded by DuPont gives us. 50 branches in the world and never a loss in 50 years. The answer is simple: they spend most of their time inventing and creating and not trying to beat bureaucracy. The formula for their company growth is innovative management; they have achieved this by implementing a lattice structure in their organization and privileging their leaders. In brief, "a lattice, no hierarchy, no titles, but plenty of leaders. All commitments are voluntary". Managers can never give orders; W.L. Gore has set up a company where leaders stand out without imposing. A philosophy which reflects the true concept of leadership qualities and understood to make people carry out tasks without having to give them orders. Our company is facing a period of transition; from being a competent company to becoming a creative company. From Apple we learn; creativity is company philosophy.

IN TODAY'S DAY AND AGE, INTELLIGENCE, OBEDIENCE AND ACCURACY ARE THREE FEATURES ALL TOO COMMON

- they are a must and essential in every company organization. Passion, creativity and initiative have become the three values with which we can make money. The real power companies have today are the people who they can count on, and only with their value and contribution in company matters, are they able to count on a revival and evolution of the business. Companies must be versatile, open to innovation and work side by side with their employees every day. Management objectives shouldn't be to convince workers to simply work in the organization, but to have a worthwhile target to reach that they are involved in and that excites them. The concept of creativity was the main theme in Lyn Heward's speech, Executive Producer for Special Projects in Cirque Du Soleil, one of the most innovative managerial and circus realities worldwide. A distinguished and elegant woman who is able to capture the audience's attention with her convincing charm and unparalleled experience. Generis (of its own kind) was the topic of her speech and so that we could better understand how creativity is an essential characteristic for any company in business, she told us the story of the 7 doors.

TODAY, CIRQUE DU SOLEIL IS AN ACTUALITY THAT IS MUCH MORE COMPLEX THAN WE CAN IMAGINE. The word "Circo" could surely be deceiving and make one think that it is simply a recreational and entertainment company, but today Cirque Du Soleil is a well-organized organization. A group of artists came up with the idea to combine passion and creativity and turn Circo's mission into a new form of entertainment which would attract people from every country. The secret of course was to present a new way of doing show business, to identify "Circo" as a dramatic mix of the circus arts, and street entertainment.

From its opening in 1982 to today Cirque Du Soleil has established itself and become a complex entrepreneurial reality made up of 4,000 people who live and work trying to give their contribution. The body consists of various professional characters: artists, acrobats, dancers, engineers and many more. Cirque Du Soleil is made up of an assorted mix of competences. This makes it a truly unique and inimitable artistic, ballet, acrobatic, musical and spectacular show which is in continuous evolution. A voyage into a world that always lives and works with an eye focussed on the future and constantly with it. The story of the 7 doors is an anecdote used for providing the company with the know-how it needs to evaluate talent and creativity. According to Lyn "Creativity is an attitude we all have and Cirque Du Soleil tries to stimulate its collaborators to express their own creative qualities".

INSPIRED BY CHARLES DICKENS, LYN HEWARD CALLS THE FIRST DOOR 'GREAT EXPECTATIONS'. We all have dreams and wishes and therefore we try to make them come true. They must come true. We all have the right to have expectations and dreams. The recurring question behind this door is: what are my potentials?

The second door is called "Surrender to your senses" and this is the search in our inner selves to discover our potentials through the use of our senses, to understand how creative we truly are, and express this creativity. The environment outside helps us to simulate that creative inclination, by helping us understand our tendencies.

Brilliant minds are inspired by what they see and hear. Here is where training and recruitment come in: improve existing resources and search for new talents, new minds and fresh ideas for our organizations.

The third door is referred to as "Treasure hunting and creative transformation". How can the company support its people in their treasure hunt and transform this into creative power? Every person is unique and must express their ability by transforming it into creative power, overcoming fears and mental barriers.

In this sense the company organization can become a useful environment by creating the necessary conditions to make people feel unique and also help them to manifest their creativity. Creative transformation is not about individual qualities, but finding the creative components each individual has. It is essential that management find the right methods to have these talents come out so that they are unique and necessary for company life. This is the challenge - to discover what is creative and what is useful for the company.

The fourth door refers to "The nurturing environment". The environment is an important component when expres-

sing creativity. A stimulating environment facilitates creative abilities and this is why if we look at it through a child's eyes, it permits us to have a brilliant and eager mind. Environments where many people interact are the most stimulating because they can share ideas, information and anything that can help them to be more creative. The fifth door is the most important and difficult one. "How contrasting everyday challenges, cultural differences and consumer expectations become creative". We are faced with challenges, limited resources, reduced budgets and financial problems every single day. These situations all require a solution. What are the external influences that determine our creative process?

The sixth door is "Risk taking". Do you ever get burned? Managing any company presents daily risks. Management must always be prepared to take on these risks; these risks may be creative, cultural, etc. Never give up risk taking.

And finally we come to the seventh door and that is "Keeping fresh". This is about how top management is able to constantly be informed and continuously be kept up to date. The example comes from up high, so management should always be a reference point for people who work in the company and do everything necessary so as to constantly keep up with times.

Innovation and creativity represent the two main elements which companies must focus on, in order to look ahead and overcome negative situations. Flexibility and adapting to changing conditions of the market are the elements which permit any company to continue existing and stand out from others. Only the best survive on the market. •