

Simplicity and innovation

A big part of my job as an Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Innovation Science (IJIS)* and as a President and CEO of the International Association of Innovation Professionals (IAOIP) is to constantly read about new innovations in tools and techniques, and research into what works and what does not. In fact, the entire premise of the IAOIP is to create a globally accepted body of knowledge that is not only complete, but elegant in its simplicity.

So, what has struck me recently are the dichotomies between, say “Tinder” (an app which I have never actually used) and most of the airlines from around the world (with a few exceptions). A recent common theme that I have observed in innovation is the application and general acceptance of “simplicity”. When using Tinder, one simply swipes left or right on a picture. If you find someone interesting looking, you can read a short bio and contact them, with the potential of actually meeting some day. In many respects, how is this any different than the way most people meet these days (excepting arranged marriages, etc.)? You see someone on the street, you find them attractive and you introduce yourself. If they are also attracted to you, you talk a little, find out if you have anything in common, then arrange a date to find out more about each other. Add to all this that Tinder has created a standard of swiping right and left that is now common in so many applications. Of course, when I was single, it never worked that elegantly; but I can definitely see how Tinder simply models the natural dating world. Contrast this to more complicated dating sites that promise to “match you with your perfect mate” after spending a couple of hours filling out a form. This may be more like the old days when your parents set you up, or there was an arrangement – but at present, it just all seems too complicated.

Let’s contrast this to the airlines. I recently traveled from my home base in Houston, Texas to Dubai to meet with members of the IAOIP. I am thinking this is great because I can move my status back up to “Gold” with the roughly 16,000-mile round-trip. Well, that was my first mistake. It turns out that the airline where I have member status has now decided that the more you pay, the more miles you are credited. Because the IAOIP is a not-for-profit organization, we don’t have the money to buy business class tickets, which, as I recall gave you more than 16,000 total miles. It turns out that you have to pay approximately US\$500 more if you want credit for the full 16,000 miles round-trip; instead, they only gave me 4,000 miles round-trip because I purchased a discounted ticket. So much for the days when a mile was a mile. Regardless, what I don’t think these people have figured out is that a smart individual will do the simple math and figure out that 12,000 miles (the difference) is not worth a half of a ticket (assuming you can even get a 25,000-mile ticket) at a price of US\$500. In other words, this is a terrible deal because if you extrapolate the cost, a “free ticket” will be US\$1,000. I want status, but only fly this airline and its partners because I already have it. As I won’t make status this year, I would guess that I will no longer purchase tickets with them and tolerate the single stops I have to make to maintain my status. In other words, I fly approximately 25 times per year, and because they want to take away a few miles because I cannot afford more expensive tickets, they have probably lost US\$15,000 per year of my business to

earn an additional US\$500 from those ignorant of the fact that the extra miles are a terrible deal.

Let's add to this the fact that it is sometimes impossible to calculate what the actual cost of your ticket will be after adding baggage fees, change fees and other surprises. It's no wonder that Tinder is probably much more respected than most airlines. To add to that, consider the airlines with the highest rankings (last year it was JetBlue and Southwest in the USA). JetBlue is a little confusing, but Southwest charges nothing for baggage and you never lose your ticket funds. Buy your ticket; if you don't use it, get full credit to use again. No change fees. No baggage fees. Flight attendants who don't take themselves too seriously. Get on the flight and pick your seat. As a business traveler, it is just so much simpler than any of the legacy carriers. I suspect there are probably a lot of people willing to pay what they expect to pay. Of course, I can't fly Southwest Airlines to the Middle East; but if I am not earning "actual" miles anyway, then who really cares anymore? Another benefit when it comes to simplicity is the fact that you are only charged 25,000 miles when you go to their international destinations.

You are beginning to see this in innovations everywhere. Software is becoming more user-friendly and simple. The Microsoft Word I use today (2016) is much simpler than the previous version for Mac (2011). Think about your operating system, the icons you see and the car you drive. There are 50 more valuable features in my new automobile than in the one I traded in. Newer vehicles are more intuitive, with dashboard icons that make sense and require fewer, simpler steps. So, my advice for this issue is to look at innovating through the user interface, whether that be steps in a manufacturing project or icons in an app. As I have said before, the IAOIP will be updating our website before this edition of the *IJIS* is even published. It will be simpler to use, with more icons and less text. We are striving to follow the mind map of a first-time user navigating a site that they are not familiar with. Check us out at www.iaoip.org and let us know what you think in the contact form.

As for this quarterly edition, we have six tremendous papers to share with our members and subscribers. As usual, IAOIP members have open access to the *IJIS* when they are logged in as a member. The papers this month are as follows:

The first paper by Walton, Glassman and Sandall visits a phenomenon that received a lot of press a few years ago, but is just as critical currently as it was then. The "innovation stock market" has become a common tool used by innovation professionals to accept, triage and track ideas throughout the company. As a valuable front-end-of-innovation tool, proper use dramatically increases the number and quality of ideas created and implemented, when done well. In the case of this paper, the authors use a specific application, but discuss the many other products that are available to practitioners. As you read this paper, you will have a better idea of what is available, how to use it and the power in the "wisdom of the employee crowd".

The next paper is a study of something that is near and dear to many peoples' hearts – innovation in wine-making. Abel and Allesandro examine measurement of innovation in the wine business from the perspective of idea management, idea implementation, collaboration and learning. A nice follow-up to the previous paper on idea management.

Our third paper, authored by Iddris, examines innovation in the context of supply chains. As in the previous two papers, idea management becomes a central theme as the author explores innovation capability and its ability (and competence) to interact with customers, suppliers, competitors and other stakeholders to generate and implement

ideas based on available resources, balanced with customer needs. From the perspective of open innovation, this asks the question of idea management in the supply chain, whereby outsiders participate in the idea management process.

Our fourth paper is by previous authors and frequent contributors, Mathsoudi, Duffield and Wilson. For regular readers, you know that these authors are interested in innovation in the construction industry. They continue to build on a case they had developed previously. Specifically, they explore the question of satisfaction and the soft aspects of the organization to extrapolate positive construction outcomes to the use of innovative construction methods and materials used.

Paper five explores a dual topic that we have not seen tied together very often. Addae-Boateng and Dzisi examine the question of family businesses and innovation. Specifically, how does a family-owned business promote innovation in its base of employees? It is an interesting question of shifting the center of innovation and entrepreneurship away from the owner/operator/entrepreneur, which can be challenging, as this organization attempts to move from a “centralized” innovation ideal to one where the employees begin to contribute. In many companies, this could be seen as uncomfortable and less than organic.

Moving from Ghana to Kenya, family business to government, we swing 180 degrees in the sixth paper to ask about public sector innovation. The study by Agolla and Van Lill reveal poor management practices and over-reliance on existing resources and processes, which contribute to barriers to innovation in the public sector. The authors list leadership practices, social factors, technological factors and management practices as critical components of public sector innovation.

A final reminder for *IJIS* readers is that Volume 9 Number 3 (approximately September 2017) will be a special issue of the proceedings of the next IAOIP annual meeting. There is currently a call for papers, and the six best papers will be eligible for oral presentation at the IAOIP annual meeting in March 2017 (see www.innova-con.org). Papers not accepted as the six best will still be considered for a poster session at the conference.

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