

Innovating business – a question of thinking different

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Abstract

Empiric studies in the field of innovating business show that it is difficult to think “different”. There is an increased need for thinking differently as a means to find new ways of innovating business. The task for innovation is to differentiate from others in order to be in front of competitors.

The Blue Ocean(Chan Kim & Mauborgne 2005) implementation is a practical action on Porter’s claims : “strategic positioning means performing different activities from rivals’ or performing similar activities in different ways”(s.62), and further “competitive strategy is about being different” (s64)(Porter 1996). Finally, targeting innovation is a matter of doing things better, but even more important differently(Francis & Bessant 2005).

This paper reports on our experience in implementation of a Blue Ocean strategy in a group of SME networks. The idea is, according to Blue Ocean-strategy, to change the business/network to be value oriented. The main purpose is in this connection to innovate something quite different from what the competitors do and thereby make the competition irrelevant.

The paper finds that one of the significant obstacles in a real breakthrough towards radical innovation is the ability both to think differently and act differently.

In search of solving the problem raised on this background: the importance of different thinking and the lack of ability to do so raise the question to be investigated:

What does it mean to do things differently and to think differently?

The research into this question is methodologically conducted as a combination between case studies and interpretations of these according to literature which deals with the concept of “difference”. Theoretically the approach is hermeneutical with an offspring in Paul Tillich’s notion on man as different(Tillich 1951) and human actualization in art(Tillich 1990) and on Gilles Deleuze’s thoughts on increased differentiation(Deleuze & Guattari 1987;Deleuze & Guattari 1994). The paper aims at opening new ground in a cross disciplinary innovation collaboration involving both empirical findings in SME cases and on theories rooted in philosophy, theology and art.

Keywords: Difference, innovation, network, collaboration, art

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