

DEVELOPING CREATIVE COMPETENCIES IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

FORMACIÓN DE COMPETENCIAS CREATIVAS EN LA GESTIÓN DE NEGOCIOS

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Received: 23.06.15

Accepted: 27.08.15

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the importance of developing creative competencies in business sciences professionals, specifically marketing. It seeks to show the scope and advantages found in the development of lateral thinking so as to achieve a more empathetic relationship between business managers and their target audiences within a globalized economic context requiring greater personalization and social emphasis on corporate actions. This all is addressed from the parallel experience in creative and business schools, with the new approaches in business planning based on lateral, iterative, and cooperative thinking exercises as a starting point, and existing innovations as an example. The goal is to generate model proposals that can be integrated into the curriculums, and can shorten the gaps expressed today by independent business schools as opposed to the typical university academic model, and also to provide for the generational gaps existing in new consumers.

Keywords: training, creativity, debate method, competencies

RESUMEN

El presente artículo expone la importancia de formar competencias creativas en los profesionales de las ciencias empresariales, específicamente de mercadotecnia. Busca mostrar los alcances y ventajas que ofrece el desarrollo del pensamiento lateral, a fin de lograr una relación más empática entre los gestores de la empresa con sus públicos en un contexto económico globalizado que requiere de mayor personalización y énfasis social de las acciones corporativas. Se aborda desde la experiencia paralela en escuelas creativas y de negocios, partiendo desde los nuevos enfoques de la planificación de negocios basada en ejercicios de pensamiento lateral,

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iterativo y de cooperación; tomando como ejemplo las innovaciones producidas. Se busca generar propuestas de modelos que se integren a los currículums, que acorten las brechas que hoy se expresan desde escuelas de negocio independiente frente al modelo academicista de las universidades; así como atender a las brechas generacionales que se imponen en nuevos consumidores.

Palabras clave: formación, creatividad, método de debate, competencias

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Businesses last over time as they manage to create and keep long-term relationships with their customers, generating a loyalty that goes beyond the comparison of products based on quality standards, as well as on an advertising commercial war. Therefore, the business war transfers from product superiority to leadership in the identification and anticipation of the customer's needs. These needs are not always recognized by consumers, instead they are, in some way, stimulated by the commercial offer.

Authors such as Cross and Brodt (2002), and Gladwell (2007), consolidate their reflections on business intuition and marketing to reduce decision-making in a competitive environment and even to make the right decision in a multiple information context, pointing out that, on some occasions, the excess of information in critical situations is not of any help, but rather hinders the ability to focus on the essential.

Thus, management foundations are subject to models and manuals that need to be contrasted and validated by the current reality, by the competitive external environment and by the organizations' own flows. Among other things, finance would be affected by global capital flows and

internal markets, and logistics by market and supply chain internationalization. Human resources are nowadays mobile, as are also the requirements for their education. In addition, in the commercial field, changes in competitive demand and offer render daily decision-making necessary (Gladwell, 2013).

The literature on the individual's selection not being rational is vast. The consumer is a human being involved in a sphere of emotions and a social environment which influences him or her (Badot, Carrier, Cova, Desjeux and Filser, 2009; Bourdieu, 1988; Golte, 2010; Rivera, Arellano and Molero, 2000). The consumer's buying motivations cannot be understood through rational stimulus-response decisions, as a work scheme, without understanding the context through which he or she interprets his or her needs, brands and products chosen. Social psychology and social sciences, whose purpose is not only to analyze the consumer's motivations, but to effectively activate them intervene here. Understanding that human beings cannot interpret nor explain their own acts is the foundation of modern methods of business innovation and market research.

The construction of human rationality is an ideology that became politics during the Illustration, with the French Revolution, which sought to overthrow dogmas, but

only created another one: human rationality (Ortiz, 2011). This responded to the aspiration of elevating the common man to transform him into a supreme being, and hence justify his domain over nature.

For social consumption researchers, the final motivations transcends personal motivations and establish themselves in the logic of an ostentatious purpose, receiving a strong cultural influence assumed as obvious under a logic previously established by social consensus. This is based on people's negotiation to get to know the motivations of their acts as they are irrational (Bauman, 2010; Douglas and Isherwood, 2008; Miller, 1999; Veblen, 1955; Yonnet, 2005). Their socialization experiences are the beginning of the learning process of their group and society's values (Duque, 2010). When they learn what has value for the others, they start their cultural exchange. And goods are part of these transactions, becoming a symbol of personal and collective value.

This is all based on the notion that reason is individual, but emotions collective (García, 1995). Analyzing the individual's context creates a social view which then becomes an activating concept for consumer behavior sciences. Reason appeals to an individual subject, with room to reflect on a social interaction scenario, as is consumption. This would be equivalent to saying that we can isolate the person who expresses his or her opinion at the newsstand or the saleslady at the grocery store to have a moment to reflect before making decisions, stopping time and space before deciding, without even regarding the family or friend's influence.

Therefore, we cannot assume consumers' sole statements as an absolute truth to respond to the question: "why does the consumer buy?"

Their answers are rationalized by language or conventions (Pope, 2002). It is lateral or indirect research techniques which allow to find the real motives. They are: facilitating (true thinking, consumer's ideology), projective (emotions expressed towards objects or symbols) or ethnological (consumer's doings and habits) (Quiñones, 2013).

Educational institutions, both national and international, give importance to the development of creativity using various teaching strategies which enable these innovation skills in the student. For the effects of this article, we considered some of these institutions; for example, in the United States, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, through its Media Lab, seeks to develop projects that integrate technology, multimedia and design in order to stimulate innovation, teaching how to invent and reinvent tools that will allow human beings to experiment and be supported by business and technology (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015). Furthermore, in Canada, the University of Toronto, through its graduate school Rotman School of Management, applies the Integrative Thinking and Business Design methodologies in their MBA programs as tools to provide creative solutions (Rotman School of Management, 2015).

Likewise, in Denmark, the Kaos Pilot business school has become a referent in social innovation, defining itself as a hybrid between business and design school, fostering teaching programs that are not simply designed to train students to adjust to the future, but to create it. They work on projects with an educational philosophy based on the foundations of experimentation, exploration, experience and business (Kaospilot, 2015). In a context closer to us, in Spain, the Escuela de Organización Industrial business school

offers-within its MBA programs curriculum-the Applied Innovation module, where the student trains his or her creativity with Design Thinking techniques, so that this innovation enables him or her to provide new solutions to current problems in the economic environment (Escuela de Organización Industrial, 2015).

Peru is not far from these new creation models integrated to education. Universidad Tecnológica del Peru, in its MBA program, employs the methodology Lego Serious Play workshop to enhance the experience in the student's strategic creation and transformation process, generating an experiential process that allows for the development of leadership, thinking, communication and problem-solving competencies in organizations and teams (Universidad Tecnológica del Perú, 2015).

Consequently, if these consumer business models focus on satisfying needs, the value proposal is an overall construction among business agents, the public researched and the researcher team. This "truth" will always be an interpretation as science itself, or as great detectives do, gathering evidence to create a theory to explain the causes.

The teaching process in business schools requires the training of professionals who can face changing situations and contexts. The economy and market unpredictability, subject to global changes, generates a scenario where long-term plans need to be tinged with decision-making on the fly (Gonzales y Lara, 2011).

Creative Process in Marketing Planning DICP

Business planning should stimulate the territory of data objectivity for decision-making, starting in turn from the creativity and sensitivity

territory for public relationships (Gladwell, 2005; Ostelwalder and Pigneur, 2011).

Business start-ups, adapting to trends and capitalizing opportunities in the short-term, have generated business planning models that go from the structured and sequential plan to innovation or design thinking (Müller and Thoring, 2012). These are iterative models, which design the value proposal in a swiftly transmittable scheme for a potential investor. This would have generated the leadership of new business schools, such as the Stanford Graduate School of Business (2006), directly linked to technological entrepreneurship circuits, as Silicon Valley (1951), where these models are preferred over plans.

To provide an example, in this article (and based on previous consulting experiences in different companies and brands), we propose the development of a methodological process that presents the following characteristics:

- a) Iterative, because it allows the continuous reformulation of assumptions, improving on new information and finds obtained inductively.
- b) Creative, because it leads to original creation based on itself.
- c) Experiential, because of the interface experience with people and groups and the transformation in those who execute and lead.
- d) Pragmatic, because it has a practical application up from the formulation and it helps to solve real day to day problems.

Therefore, we propose the following sequence for the creative process in business: dilemma - research - concept - planning.

NEXT, THE PROCESS IN DETAIL:

2.1 Business dilemma: The starting point of business management is the correct diagnosis of the situation on which to lay out the intervention. This can identify the long-term causes standardizing business policies, medium-term causes proposing strategic matrices and short-term causes acting on a tactical guide.

The long-term challenge a company faces and that calls for an intervention is framed within the business strategy, which can be defined by resource supply and production objectives, finance structure, commercial challenges, human capital or geopolitical training.

These problem can arise from the market, affecting the whole sector or the country, which may suppose category demand and offer transformations or complementary or supplementary market transformations. An example of this is the increase of the emerging sector's expense capacity, which could be originating some demand sophistication, as is the case in school education (De la Barrera, 2013). Groups such as Intercorp have requested the innovation agency IDEO to design an educational proposal, with which they have created a franchise educational offer, located in social growth areas, leaving aside the location model in residential areas of traditional middle classes (Khan, 2012). They offer a competitive price, lower than that of religious schools (ADECORE) and with a particular pedagogy which promotes play and entrepreneurship.

A contextual analysis of the historical data, beyond the data collected ad hoc for the study, was necessary in order to determine the cycles of the environmental factors or

principles that allow to model behavioral patterns.

At this stage, we need to solve the environmental dilemmas involving the consumer and collaborator, seen as human beings immerse in a world of survival and existential decisions prior to the customer or worker function, for which the company and its products must adjust to their transcendental daily necessities, and not the other way around.

These dilemmas can also be sociocultural, as those generated by the economy, eco-sustainability, demographic and generational changes, citizen rights, conflicts, identity, among others. Businesses and their products should contribute to solving the challenges posed by changes in thought and sociodemographic variations. For example, technology companies such as Google (Google.org, 2011) and Verizon (Verizon Wireless, 2014) have proposed, inside their organizations and as communication campaigns, the promotion of sciences and engineering for girls, adolescents and youngsters as part of a plan to balance the gender quota in the positions that imply engineering and technology decisions.

2.2 Research: In this proposal, the research process, both at the organization and the market level, should focus more on an exploratory task than a descriptive one. This proposal is justified by the fact that it tries to reveal new routes or be established before a situation of change.

In this regard, phenomenological design becomes important and enables to find out people's perceptions, the meaning of subjective experiences and collectively built perspectives (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2014). The phenomenological model

makes it possible to understand how stimuli pondered by the industry and socialization contingencies triggering phenomenological impressions subjectively impact on objects and underlying experiences.

Phenomenology started to take the knowledge of other people seriously. This movement places the individual in the framework of a social context and reckons knowledge a collective building business. Knowledge is never about a sole individual's issue learning things about an external reality. Individuals who interact with each other end up imposing their constructs on reality: the world is constructed socially (Douglas and Isherwood, 1990, p. 79).

Impressions mediated by intuitions on people, facts and objects that become socialization norms in commercial or working environments. Consequently, studies do not focus on the individual or the world, but on the world as experienced by the individual (Hernández, et al., 2014); therefore, the expression of the meaning of these experiences enhances pursuits constructed from, in, to and with the individuals, appealing to the intuitive thinking principles, requiring saving lateral thinking beyond rationality; with extra-verbal dynamics to activate cultural, emotional and biological imprints. Among these techniques we have the use of collage, incomplete phrases, association of ideas, brand archetypes (based on Jung's model), brainstorming, quick phrase ping pong, regressions, sensorial stimulations, among others (Quiñones, 2013).

2.3 Concept: It arises from the need of the business agent to get involved in the process of adapting the research findings to face the creation of concepts that explain the solution to the dilemmas analyzed.

An exact reflection of reality is not expected, rather a proposal for understanding and a proper alternative arising from the intellectual and material resources available to the business agent team in order to address this part of reality faced.

The application of lateral thinking exercises that demand leaving behind conventional forms used to face business challenges is needed. Inspiration is sought in the good practices of other companies, including other non-related categories in the premeditated quest for changing current business practices. For this, creative techniques of art are employed, where the use of spatial, visual, and sensorial thinking is transferred to the business field. In the same way, reflection on current issues and their context should have transcendence and impact on society based on intervention.

Therefore, brands such as Absolut (Rivas, 2013) and BMW luxury cars (BMW Group, 2014) resorted to the presence of renown plastic artists in their planning sessions to refresh new ideas in order to reinvent their brands and designs in a highly competitive and expenses market, where customer conservatism was an assumption. However, new inspiration sources were found through the artistic disruption for their new product presentations, communications and, also, for reinforcing their managers soft competencies towards empathizing better with their customers, as well as greater aesthetics.

2.4 Planning: The final part of the creative process comprises organizing actions to establish behavioral changes in the internal and external public, considering companies as organizations made up of human beings with human purposes. In the specific case of marketing management, based on satisfying

customer needs, the step from scarcity to full satisfaction is essentially a behavioral change. In addition, the differential perception of the brand, the satisfaction, loyalty and the buying action are behavioral changes.

Today, business model planning involves an active role, both from collaborators and consumers, and in product improvement and the business model's redesign. This is leading to the creation of planning skills in changing scenarios, and with flexible approaches according to the constant feedback with the audiences involved.

The social media and their influence in the perception of brands are having an impact on the way communication decisions are made, as well as those interpreting their corporate strategy. Examples as those of Tottus' "Buy one TV and if Peru gets to the finals (Copa America), we'll give you your money back" (Martinez, 2015) and BCP "Gay Pride Day" (Vela, 2015), have represented the most renown marketing cases in Peru. This is the result of the impact that networks have on the brand image, generating a public pressure loop that directly appeals to company managers. This forced the exertion of a direct leadership upon brands, business decisions and public management, evidencing the need to decide rapidly about an agitated transforming context, as well as the need to have the competencies to assume the company's representation.

This planning process does not entail the repetition of formulas mechanically, but an understanding process of each situation towards a final goal of change both for external and internal customers.

In sum, we seek to train business agents in the development of an organization with

greater flexibility in their processes and market adaptation, greater design sources for their products and communication, improvement generation, integration of collaborators into innovation processes, developing an alert attitude to market and competition trends, high performance teams in search of better practices beyond the competing category, talent search, a better image before authorities and specialized press due to innovation and its impact upon society and academia based on their own success or failure experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

Public exposure of brands in social networks demands a visible leadership from their senior officers and managers. This is due to the prominence that consumers and collaborators have acquired in the business information and social spheres, a scenario that is no longer foreign to companies. Directive competencies developed in this communicational field and intuitive decision-making regarding public opinion have become vital.

Therefore, business management is in itself a creative process starting from a real situation towards an approach that intervenes in the external social reality, such as the consumers' community, and also the internal, that of the organization. Education in disciplines that seek to objectify reality, as statistics, microeconomics, costs, processes, finance, among others, has contributed throughout time to shape business agents with solid decision-making criteria. But the formulas that worked before may not necessarily work today.

The new generation of young students is manifesting an orientation towards linking

vocation with employment, work flexibility with support to social causes. These attitudes define the demands in labor markets. The interweaving of the technological aspect with the possibility to access global entrepreneurship opportunities is creating non-official spaces of higher and business education that combine creativity and result immediacy. Business schools need to generate mixed academic training systems linked to entrepreneurship, empathy with the consumer and collaborators, communicational leadership, short-term decision-making and lateral thinking.

However, the new business scenario may be leading to the need for re-discovering professionals' soft skills, from the recognition of their own sensitivity to the empathy with consumers and their own human resource.

This training would allow to involve the business agents' creative talent that enables them to anticipate changing circumstances, both human and social, because they have little time and descriptive information on reality, but allowing the creation of organizations and brands with a more empathic appearance, connecting and generating long-term loyalty.

Creativity, as a job for and with human beings, entails understanding their nature, assuming there are realities to discover and no absolute truths. This creative process is based on a constant critical and analytical attitude, based on the absolute assumption of moving in uncertain and changing scenarios. Thus, there is a dilemma that companies and brands face within the social framework they belong to. This should be solved together with the internal and external public, and in order to ensure the proximity with contemporary discourse social research is key. Creation is part of a managerial decision because it supposes a change or response to this transforming scenario. Hence,

planning demands the concurrence of actions that ensure prominence and effective change based on intervention.

Involving creativity with strategic thinking, combining the academic with the technological field, outlining analytical criteria with business intuition, developing curricula that are structured but also flexible before change is part of the challenges of creative business education for the new generation of agents of this millennium.

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