

Editorial: *Employee experience, learning while executing, working on the organization's health, and contributing to company's innovation engine*

Thirty years ago Tom Peters wrote the well-known book entitled “Thriving on Chaos” (Handbook for a Management Revolution, Alfred A. Knopf , New York, 561 pp.).ⁱ On October 25, 1987, Robert Krulwich, the economics correspondent on the “CBS Morning News”, wrote an article published in New York Times, showing that Peters’s thesis - as in the books co-authored before, “In Search of Excellence” and “A Passion for Excellence” - to improve constantly and respond to changing market conditions is the only way for a company to be excellent, but this time telling to middle or senior managers of American corporations to shift gears to keep their customers, going beyond to survive with the excellence formula (decentralized management, flexible production, customer-inspired design and emphasis on innovation and quality), and demanding 600 percent improvement from their staff, dedication to quality being absolute, and challenging everything, changing everything, and improve everything, creating a sense of urgency.ⁱⁱ

Twenty years ago, in 1997, McKinsey coined the phrase “*war for talent*”, as remembered by Josh Bersin, Principal and Founder Bersin by Deloitte, Deloitte Consulting LLP, in December 2013, when he also underlined, among other aspects, that “*the talent won*”, the above mentioned war being over, and organizations needing to *treat every employee as a brand ambassador*, while focusing management on coaching and development (not just performance).ⁱⁱⁱ Just a month before, in November 2013, in his presentation at HSM World Business Forum, Milano, Tom Peters has reinforced the fact that “*Brand = Talent*”, and that “*At its core, every relationship-partnership decision (employee, vendor, customer etc.) is a strategic decision about: ‘Innovate, ‘Yes’ or ‘No’*”.^{iv} It is well-known that Tom Peters (a former McKinsey consultant, named the world’s “most highly paid management consultant” in the 1996 Guinness Book of World Records) coined in 1997 the phrase “personal branding” in his essay “The Brand Called You”. It is interesting to note within this framework the fact that this was remembered two month before, in September 2013, in an article entitled “You Are What You Tweet”, and published in the American magazine “The New Yorker” a week after The Oxford Dictionaries Online added the term “selfie”.^v

As we remembered last year, Tom Peters showed in an interview for McKinsey Quarterly, September 2014, among other aspects, that to deal with the insane pace of change involves living to get smarter and to learn new things, going up the value-added chain beyond the kinds of tasks and roles that can be automated. In 2016, on the occasion of a Deloitte Private Company Managers Annual Meeting in Toronto, Tom Peters also reminded us of the three rules highlighted by Deloitte’s representatives (Michael E. Raynor and Mumtaz Ahmed, Authors, in “The Three Rules: How Exceptional Companies Think,” Publisher: Portfolio; First Edition May 30, 2013) of how exceptional companies think: better before cheaper; revenue before cost; there are no other rules. And on the same slide Peters presented the three rules underlined by Jeff

Colvin, Fortune (“The Economy Is Scary ... But Smart Companies Can Dominate”) of how smart companies can dominate in a scary economy: they manage for value, not for EPS (Earnings per Share); they get radically customer-centric; they keep developing human capital.^{vi}

The 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends was entitled “Rewriting the rules for the digital age” because of change at an accelerating rate, which creates new rules for business and for HR within the so-called “Fourth Industrial Revolution” (Klaus Schwab, The Fourth Industrial Revolution, World Economic Forum, 2016) or the “Big Shift” (John Hagel, John Seely Brown, and Lang Davison, “The Big Shift: Measuring the forces of change,” Harvard Business Review, July - August 2009).^{vii} Deloitte underlined the centrality of the employee experience, which is affected by leadership, organization structure and teams, career mobility, learning, diversity, employment brand, and HR services.^{viii} And there is no doubt – as recently argued by two members of the Consortium for Advancing Adult Learning & Development (CAALD), convened by McKinsey & Company – that organizations have to learn while executing in order to adapt continually.^{ix}

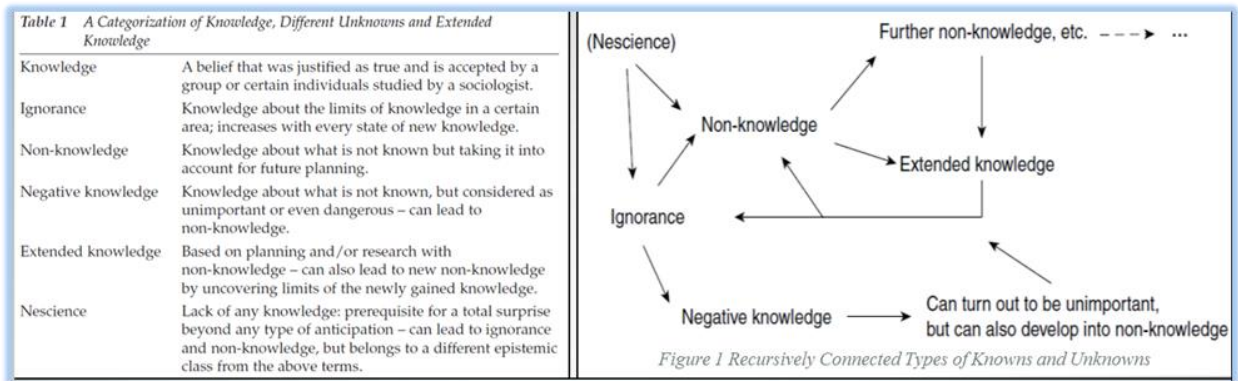
In September 2012 we cited (Karl) Albrecht’s Law - “Intelligent people, when assembled into an organization, will tend toward collective stupidity” – within the context of approaching the topic of “The organizational health, the emotional memory of the organization, the positive associations of CRM capabilities, and the desired change to drive organizational performance.”^x But, beyond the humoristic quote, let’s come back to this year... to contradict again the above mentioned law on the basis of the recent confirmed evolutions.

To work on the organization’s health (defined by McKinsey as the organization’s ability to align around a common vision, execute against that vision effectively, and renew itself through innovation and creative thinking) by redefining how to connect, engage, and communicate with its employees, doing what the organization is already doing but doing it differently, it is a recent McKinsey’s recommendation based on the proofed conviction that balancing short-term performance and long-term health is the best way to run a business, conviction redoubled recently by new evidence confirming the achievement of tangible performance gains (not only measurable improvements in their organizational well-being) in as little as 6 to 12 months by the companies that work on their health.^{xi} All the more so because encouraging employees to work in more agile ways, within the context of a culture of continuous learning and improvement, is one of the steps (alongside focusing C-level attention on growth and setting clear goals for analytics) recommended by McKinsey to be taken in the current digital age by executives and their companies in order to drive organic growth.^{xii} Talent is attracted and strategic options are created by growth while generating financial resources to fund new moves.^{xiii} And into the necessary conversation around *adaptive innovation* (to adjust to the fast-changing needs of target markets; driven by strategic internal and external relationships) and *value* (which can be co-created via adaptive innovation), both employees and customers (both being important recipients of value together with value-chain partners, investors, the media etc.) are crucial contributors to company’s innovation engine.^{xiv}

The 21st annual event KMWorld 2017 (The Knowledge Management & Enterprise Solutions Conference), which will take place on November 6-9, 2017, in Washington, DC, has the theme “People Power, Thinking & Tech”.^{xv} As underlined by the organizers, people are at the core of knowledge sharing and the key to high functioning organizations. There is no wonder what the tracks at this above mentioned event include: Knowledge management (KM) strategies & practices: *People*; Digital workspace of the future; Social collaboration (to interact and share information to achieve common goals); KM strategies & practices: *Processes*; KM tools & techniques (it is important to select the right mix of KM approaches, chatbots, and agile frameworks); Learning, change, & culture; km strategies & practices: *Value & management* (a challenge for KM being always to provide value, ROI, and show measurable results); *Innovation*, future-proofing, & cognitive tech; Content, knowledge, & learning from failure.^{xvi}

Looking at this challenging theme of “People Power, Thinking & Tech”, four articles come to our mind:

- two articles published on the blog of Saffron Interactive – “*Too much data, too little insight*”^{xvii} and “*Leveraging the IKEA effect to create an LMS your learners love*”^{xviii} – which highlighted the problems posed by knowledge management, and revealed (going beyond Bersin’s Predictions for 2014 report concerning the need to improve knowledge contribution and extend learning architecture in order to improve company’s performance) the findings of a Saffron Interactive survey, such as: when needing to find insights and information at work people go overwhelmingly to Google (instant and easy to use; information from the whole of the internet, but the most relevant information being difficult to filter), with the second most popular response being to “ask a colleague” (instant and contextual; but a trusted colleague can leave the company, taking with him all of his knowledge and expertise, the average time a person stays in a job dropping to 4.4 years), from here resulting that the perfect bridge between Google and asking a colleague is the LMS (like my status);
- an article published in Current Sociology journal of International Sociological Association – entitled “*The Unknown in Process Dynamic Connections of Ignorance, Non-Knowledge and Related Concepts*”^{xix} – which underlined, for example, that: *different types of unknowns are linked together dynamically; special cases of ignorance are preceded by ignorance; negative knowledge and non-knowledge can also causally develop out of ignorance; the search for new knowledge can potentially lead to more and more unknowns instead of new knowledge, because of formerly valid knowledge which can be found invalid* (see also Table and Figure below).



Source: Gross, M., *The Unknown in Process Dynamic Connections of Ignorance, Non-Knowledge and Related Concepts*, *Current Sociology*, September 2007, Vol. 55(5), pp. 751 and 754

▪ a McKinsey’s article – entitled “Creativity’s bottom line: How winning companies turn creativity into business value and growth”^{xx} – in which the authors are arguing that creativity (which generates business value) is at the heart of business innovation (which is the engine of growth), effective creativity coming from “working the problem”, and attracted the attention on the importance of not forgetting about *the art of marketing*, while focusing increasingly on *the science of marketing* (including performance marketing, marketing AI, and advanced analytics).

Allow us to paraphrase the reputed “Father of modern marketing”, Philip Kotler (whose latest book “*My Adventures in Marketing: The Autobiography of Philip Kotler*” was published in June this year; Editorial Reviews by Tom Peters, Al Ries, and Jim Collins),^{xxi} and to add finally that if the good news is that marketing is the art of brand building, the bad news is that marketing takes a lifetime to master.

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