

Re-Thinking Bits and Bytes –A Personal Guide

By

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The world is made of visionaries and Peter Drucker is one of them. This cannot be exemplified more than in his work and publications that revolutionised the way that the world viewed Management¹, Innovation and Entrepreneurship². In his own right he is a pioneer of modern thought surrounding Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Management Productivity as his work and ideas are still applicable to the present day. Not only did his work span from the operations of an organisation but his ideas also looked into the relevance, contribution and importance of an individual to the organisation and whatever environment that they find themselves in. This is something that takes a while to grasp as people never really know or take time to dwell upon what their contribution and purpose is in any ecosystem.

As Jeffrey Kramer rightly quoted Drucker that

“The executive has to accept the responsibility for making the future happen.”³

But I would like to add my own tweak to this, it's not only the executive but every person who has to accept this responsibility. It is important to note that though this sounds simple enough to embrace, it is not an easy feat as I have had to learn that personally.

In short, I had to relocate to a foreign land due to marital commitments and as a professional who was climbing up the corporate ladder my career goals and aspirations at that time seemingly seemed to crumble. Not only was I required to learn a new language, my background and education were more relevant to the industry in a different part of the country, not where I resided and truthfully for a while I was caught up in the clutches of depression. I could not get a job due to a lot of constraints, even a menial job at that and more so because my mind had been conditioned that to feel any personal worth I should be going into an office, clocking eight hour workdays and sitting behind a desk. Nevertheless, with time I found myself homing in on the saying,

“The starting point is to recognize that change is not a threat, but an opportunity.”³

I took this up as a challenge. To me, opportunity and a new thought pattern came through my

uncapped internet connection. No, it was not through meaningless hours of watching great television programs (which I did for a while), neither was it through playing never-ending internet games. Salvation came through searching online for answers on how I can earn an income and improve my knowledge whilst I was at home and not enrolled to an educational institution which needed physical attendance.

That is when my love for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) was born. A Massive Open Online Course is an online course designed to offer unlimited participation and open access to several participants regardless of geographic location. Some are free and others function through donations and fees. There is also open interaction through forums with the course organisers and other participants. Not only did I get enlightened in subject areas that I have always been interested in for a long time but I was also exposed to critical thinking and reasoning. I enrolled on one course on Innovation and Entrepreneurship based on the musings of Peter Drucker and from that moment on my thought process changed. I realised I was the one who was missing out on an opportunity to make myself an asset in this world.

The information I learnt over a period of three weeks renewed my mindset to the point that I knew I had found something that I am passionate about and I drafted a PhD proposal based on Peter Drucker's concepts aligning them with Open Innovation in developing countries. This proposal has been getting positive feedback from prospective supervisors and hence I know I am on the right track. Moreover I then joined a portal that allowed me to work virtually online. Of course I did not break the bank with the money I earned but I surely managed to take care of my immediate needs. And all this I am sure I could not have been able to have accomplished had it not be for this digital revolution.

From my personal experience I realised that any business or individual that wants to remain relevant in this digital era has to harness the power of this change in business dynamics. Just as people moved from the Stone Age to the Iron Age, a revolution is also occurring encompassing technology, virtualisation and innovation now referred to as "Digital Darwinism.". There is no denying how the world has drastically transitioned from analog to digital within a space of a decade where social and professional interactions can be done at the touch of a button or the tap of a screen. We are in an age where important things like your wallet and travel card can be carried in the palm of your hand. So it is worthwhile to ask how individuals can take advantage of, and master, this digital maze and what exactly does the digital age hold for the employer, employee and business.

First and foremost, knowledge is power. In a knowledge based economy an individual becomes irreplaceable when they individually invest in the time to seek such knowledge and, in this digital era, the quest is much easier. The individual is the most important asset of a knowledge economy. That means the onus is on the individual to become indispensable; be it in a corporate environment or their business⁴. The workers themselves become assets hence no matter the amount of technological advancement, an innovative mind will remain an asset. The economy is no longer based on a worker's physical strength such as assembly line workers but more on connectivity and brawn. Hence the wealth of a company is now more on intellectual property than in pieces of land. The greatest asset a company can have is a well rounded knowledge worker⁵

Moreover, the beauty of a knowledge-based economy is that it is not bound by any workplace or region as knowledge knows no boundaries. This brings everyone under one global economy and opens up opportunities for small businesses to not be limited in specific geographic areas. Not only is this important for strategic business agreements but it also revolutionises how businesses conduct transactions even further restructuring the way businesses are funded. For instance, one can now build a business from investors halfway across the world. This creates boundary-less organisations that can operate in the world economy. These organisations are centred on virtualisation and innovation that prompts people to think in other terms.

Identifying the change and opportunity is where the process becomes cumbersome, but a clear identification of the dynamics of a digital and knowledge based economy yields great results for individuals and businesses on an economic and global scale. This inadvertently benefits society in several ways. Namely, there is a global exchange to solving problems through open innovation, where people have platforms to exchange ideas and experts are available on various portals as virtual workers. This enables entrepreneurs and small business owners to be able to offer high class services which are highly competitive on the global landscape.

Nevertheless, everything has a good and bad side to it. Though operating on a global landscape is attractive, without proper policies and regulation in place such endeavours will remain futile for the entrepreneur as they open themselves up to threats such as internet fraud or even the loss of great business ideas since intellectual property is easily accessible to conniving individuals. Governments should look at how best to address this globalisation in such a way that it protects citizens and their interests. This includes opening up the policy making process to the citizens over various platforms, some mostly digital, to ensure that policy addresses all the need and concerns that are raised.

Moreover, this also drives a level of confidence in citizens as they know that a level of protection is offered through legislature.

In short, I want to just give a short guide that I learnt from my experience with relation to this digital wonderland and how an individual can address these themes and become more relevant:

Be realistic:

Look at the situation you are in, whether at work or home or in business and see what exactly you want to accomplish and achieve and what are the major pitfalls. By doing so not only will you get to map the correct way of tackling the situation but you also get to be able to map the second step correctly and utilise the appropriate technology and resources to your advantage.

“This defines entrepreneur and entrepreneurship - the entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity.”²

Educate yourself:

There are knowledge essentials in this digital era which you need. Inclusive of that is just basically know how a system runs and I would want to add a step further to that, why not learn some basic such as coding or how to design a website even more how to build a website and take it from there. Professionally, for every task you need to accomplish the digital world offers a plethora of solutions. So by knowing what you are looking for not only are you a strategic thinking employee but you are efficient. This brings me to the next step,

Don't Stop Learning:

If you want to become 'extinct' then be complacent and never seek knowledge. Not only will you find yourself isolated from everything else that is around you, but you will be personally frustrated as you will perform at sub-par standards.

“Investing in yourself is the best investment you will ever make. it will not only improve your life, it will improve the lives of all those around you.”⁶

In conclusion in true Drucker fashion I can say one has to ask themselves these important questions in any situation

- What can I contribute- *“How do we organize the new within the old?”*
- How am I effective- *“How do you organize your entrepreneurial within the managerial?”*

- And above all, what do I do that brings about effectiveness in my surroundings.- “*How do you maintain the cohesion*”⁷

Bibliography

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