NEOSCHRONOS

ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

2013 INSIGHTS SERIES

2013 IN REVIEW

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on Dec 11, 2013

We love making our customers successful.

This is what drives our work at Neos Chronos. As the year nears its end, we can look back at an exciting journey. We are grateful to you, our customers, for your trust in us. Thank you.

As a small token of our appreciation, our in-house designers created this booklet containing all articles from the 2013 Insights Series. And what a year it has been!

In 2013 we saw "big data" being applied to create stronger customer engagements and enhance existing "best practices". Thanks to open-source initiatives "technology became more accessible" making it easier to create "new services". In 2013 we also saw the return of "walled gardens" in the form of the Apple and Android ecosystems. In this new context "consumer privacy" has become the new currency and "business leaders" are more then ever challenged to execute on a "strategy" that not only acknowledges "market trends", but also addresses "organisational complacency" and inspires to continuously "test the limits of the possible".

Enjoy reading!

CONTENTS

HOW GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE ACTION

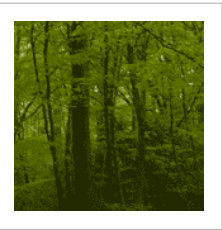by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on February 26, 2013

If you ever wondered why you just like some companies, but truly love some others, then Simon Sinek's timeless perspective from May 2010 will be worth watching and listening to. In the words of TED, Simon Sinek has a simple but powerful model for inspirational leadership all starting with a golden circle and the question "Why?". His examples include Apple, Martin Luther King, and the Wright brothers ...

To open the Youtube video click here.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

Simon Sinek at TED:
How great leaders inspire action.

NEOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

ASSESSING YOUR STRATEGY
by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on February 26, 2013

Is your organization executing on plans that bring you nearer to your company's vision?

In one of our assignments we worked in an organization that seemed to define its strategy on a quarterly basis. Pressured by an industry paradigm shift that was identified too late, and the resulting life-threatening impact on the company's existence, people were focusing on short-terms projects that would improve their respective part of the business, without understanding the effect of their actions to the overall well-being of the company.

A market environment characterized by financial crises and disruptive entrants are two frequently referred upon external causes for a company to lose direction. While this reasoning can be valid, our own experience shows that the fundamental issues more than often lie within the company itself. There are 3 particular areas to search for the root causes. We summarized those below, along with sample questions to ask:

- Thought Leadership: does your company have a documented vision and long-term strategy to get there, which is accessible and understood by everyone? Are you spending enough time evangelizing this strategy to create broad alignment towards the vision?
- People Leadership: Do you have the right people - starting at the very top of your organization - capable of leading the way? Do those people have the skills to attract, develop and retain key employees to enable you execute on the strategy and translate your vision into reality and commercial success?
- Organization Leadership: Does "Speed, Simplicity and Trust" describe the way you organization operates internally and behaves externally? Do financial targets align with people's targets and competence, and have you allocated sufficient resources to create the environment that will bring you nearer to your company's vision?

For the assignment in question, we supported the company in crystallizing its vision and documenting its strategy, defined lead propositions and initiatives to make the strategy commercially tangible, and worked with them in the field to create the first proof points. While we are not involved with the further implementation anymore, our work created the prerequisites for the company to succeed, for many years to come.

NEOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

THESE 5 POISONS COULD KILL YOUR BUSINESS
by Thomas Papanikolaou on February 28, 2013

Is your organization feeling overwhelmed by the impact of the market dynamics? Are your people discouraged that your customers do not seem to appreciate your market-leading products and services anymore? Do you think that new competitors are being successful because they start fresh and can build upon your hard work and ideas? Do you find yourself envying or even condemning their success?

If you answered any of the above questions with "yes", your business may be in a state that prevents it from learning, becoming wiser and, ultimately, succeeding. Using -- respectfully -- a Buddhist notion: your business is in a "klesha".

Kleshas, in Buddhism, are mental states that cloud the mind and manifest in unwholesome actions. Kleshas include states of mind such as anxiety, fear, anger, jealousy, desire, depression, etc. In the Buddhist Mahayana tradition, the five main kleshas are referred to as the "5 poisons". While kleshas are not meant to describe the state of businesses, they provide a remarkable description of characteristics of challenged organizations and

relationships.
The 5 poisons are:
• Ignorance: Lack of discernment; not understanding the way of things
• Attachment: Attachment or desire for what we like
• Aversion: Aversion for what we don't like, or for what prevents us from getting what we like
• Pride: Having an inflated opinion of oneself and a disrespectful attitude toward others
• Jealousy: Being unable to bear the accomplishments or good fortune of others.

An intriguing example for your consideration was recently seen at MWC 2013. Can you detect the poisonous patterns in the discussion between Mobile Operators and Over-The-Top players like Viber?

It is the job of the every leader to remove the hindrances that put their organizations in a negative and destructive state of mind. Our experience shows that the key lies in building a learning organization that innovates continuously, has the humility to do its part in a bigger picture, and does so in the most excellent way.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

Kleshas (Buddhism)

Viber CEO takes on carriers' over-the-top attack

ONE BREATH - THE STORY OF WILLIAM TRUBRIDGE

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on March 18, 2013

It looks simple, "you hold your breath and go as deep into the water as you can". That's how William Trubridge, the world champion freediver, describes his sport.

There are cases in which the gist of a complex and dangerous feat is remarkably easy to formulate. At least by those who have committed the required effort to arrive to such simplicity. As part of the Insights series, we would like to invite you to watch Nicolas Rossier's film, who spent 2 days capturing the champion's thoughts and personal philosophy in Dean's Bue Hole, Long Island, Bahamas.

William's inner peace, humility, and mental strength, as well as his determination to continue pushing the limits are awe inspiring.

To open the Youtube video, click here.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

REFLECTIONS ON PATENT TRENDS 2012

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on March 27, 2013

The Intellectual Property & Science business of Thomson Reuters, released its annual analysis of global patent trends today in its fourth-annual State of Innovation report which can be downloaded after a short registration. This publication tracks patent activity across 12 key technology areas. Going over the information provided is worth-while as it allows for some interesting observations:

• The largest increase in innovation activity is seen in medical devices, which had 15.7 percent growth over the prior period and a total volume of 60,300 inventions. It is safe to say that healthcare's importance is growing rapidly.

• Telecommunications shows a growth of 7.5 percent with a total of 94,516 inventions in 2012. Samsung, Ericsson and Qualcomm were volume leaders in Asian, European and American markets in mobile telephony. The volume leader qualification is significant: while volume is not necessarily representative for quality and actual market share today, it is an indicator of innovation ability and future market share expectations. For example, it is interesting to see that the re-bouncing Blackberry (formerly: Research in Motion), is a close second to Qualcomm in terms of mobile telephony inventions in the American market.

• Computers and peripherals recorded a 9.4 percent growth and an unbelievable total of 232,549 new inventions in year 2012. While this means exciting times ahead for gadget lovers, the total volume of new inventions indicates the need for a fundamental approach change towards Intellectual Property and licensing in general, if we are to handle the implementation of such innovation in an effective way and outside the courts.

The report snapshot provided is of course quantitative and thus conclusions need to be taken with the addition of appropriate common sense. For example, ground-breaking innovations are happening daily on the internet and many of the future technology giants might not be represented at all.

Having said this, correlating patent and innovation trends with public financial reports reveals what the business world considers as important enough to spend research money on. It is also shows indirectly where competition, if not already the case, will be the most fierce in the future.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

2012 State of Innovation Report. You will need to register to get access to the report. Please observe the copyright notice.

The Intellectual Property & Science business of Thomson Reuters

OTT SERVICES AND THE POTATO REVOLUTION

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on April 16, 2013

The term Over-The-Top (OTT) is used to describe a disruptive way and business model for delivering a service directly to end-users, typically bypassing a previously dominant player in the value chain. For the mobile industry, YouTube, BBC iPlayer and Facebook are good examples of OTT services. Albeit well established, OTT is an unfortunately chosen term: for some Over-The-Top implies delivering a service on top of someone else's infrastructure and investment. That is by far not the case, as the following example illustrates:

In 2012, amidst the peak of the Greek economic crisis, desperate farmers protested against how little vendors were willing to pay for their potatoes. So instead of selling them to middlemen at a loss, or letting them rot, they decided to just give them away to people on the street for free.

This action inspired a group of local activists in the northern city of Katerini to set up a website to allow people to order potatoes from local farmers, and then pick them up directly from their trucks in a parking lot on the weekends.

People registered in their 100's, soon bulk orders could be regularly placed, and 100's of tons of potatoes were delivered from the field directly to the consumers hands, bypassing the middlemen. The new setup allowed cash-strapped Greeks to buy potatoes at half the supermarket price, and farmers to earn double the amount they were offered from vendors before. The Potato Revolution was born, creating a win-win situation for farmers and consumers. Vendors and supermarkets lost out.

Returning to the OTT terminology, the activists did not use the existing vendor infrastructure and investment (trucks, storage areas, supermarket chains, etc.) but delivered a similar service, using the internet. The key was offering the right price, with acceptable user experience. By challenging the value added by middlemen, they forced vendors and supermarkets to make a choice: either adjust their value proposition (price) or stop selling potatoes. The supermarkets adjusted, however the late reaction

meant that the potato revolution is still going strong, with olive oil and other produce being added regularly.

The forced choice the supermarkets had to make, is not unlike the dilemma mobile operators face today. Using the ubiquity of the Internet, OTT services are successful in either delivering the value the mobile industry did not previously deliver or simply doing a much better job at it. Much like the Potato Revolution, as soon as disruption happened and the alternative was perceived as workable, there was no way back. OTT Service Providers now believe and see how they could do more. The mobile operator's middleman position has been seriously and irrevocably weakened.

There is a lot of discussion originating from the operator community asking for, and even de-

NeOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

manding, new models that reward the operators for their investment. It is highly unlikely this will happen. Instead, the focus should be turned to value creation. The good news is that operators are sitting on massively valuable and under-utilised assets they could use to generate profitable growth. We have recently uncovered such a valuable asset which is now being qualified in a global trial setup.

What can be learned from this discussion? First and foremost: a value chain player is prone to disruption whenever he / she is not perceived to deliver sufficient value. Secondly, when disruption happens, it is better focus on the search for value in the new context, rather than trying to defend a losing position. It is the task of every CEO and his / her executive team to

• create a learning organisation that naturally senses value chain movements
• act promptly to those inputs and lead and provide direction in addressing threats
• distill opportunities from the new context that create increased value for customers

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

Over-the-Top Application (OTT) from Technopedia.

Greeks ditch middleman to embrace Potato Revolution, BBC coverage.

O Topos Mou, website of the local activist group that started the Potato Revolution. The site is in Greek.

WALLED GARDEN 2.0
by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on May 22, 2013

There was a time when the mobile internet consisted of a collection of operator portals, which provided the entry to a preselected set of services consumers could access by entering the gates of a virtual garden. Competition was primarily focused on getting the consumer through the gate and keeping them within the portal, thus the term Walled Garden was born.

Then came search engines, social networks, the evolution of HTML, smartphones and mobile broadband (terribly marketed as 3G) and the carefully constructed operator garden walls started to crumble. While operators portals moved nearer to the user using technologies as on-device widgets, or by rendering pages specifically for each

device, the multitude of service choices made available by new entrants made it more difficult for operators to entice consumers. The walled garden model was ultimately superseded by the open internet model and the business landscape changed forever: offering a service alone was not enough to succeed. Instead, the new business reality demanded a complete offering mapping the customer experience beyond the service provision: devices, application stores, content and partnership agreements, APIs and developer communities to bring those to life, became inseparable parts of the new Web 2.0 paradigm. The Wall Garden business model was ultimately replaced by the Ecosystem model.

But are ecosystems open by definition?

The Apple business approach is a prime example of a closed ecosystem model. Through iTunes (and its amazing content partnerships), MacOS innovations, the ground-breaking AppStore, brilliant iPod, iPhone, iPad devices, Apple created an ecosystem that 100's of millions of consumers in the world cannot live without. Being in this ecosystem is great, with one restriction: communicating with your friends who live outside the Apple ecosystem is ... not simple. Facetime to Skype Video Call? No. iMessage to Whatsapp? Sorry. One could argue, Apple's ecosystem, albeit game-changing and innovative in so many ways, is a just a bigger and shinier Walled Garden.

Google was not aware Apple was changing the world but was fast in replicating the Apple model with Android, Google Play, Google+ and so forth. True to its vision not to do evil, Google made Android free, sparking a revolution for device manufacturers. The ecosystem built around Android soon overtook Apple's ecosystem by most metrics. This dynamic exposed a previously unseen side of the ecosystem economy: where in the Walled Garden model the competition was about getting and keeping consumers into the portals, in the ecosystem paradigm the competition moved to slowing down or stopping others from building their ecosystems. Gollum-faced patent trolls emerged. Lawsuits became a business-as-usual corporate activity. Everyone against everybody.

The inability to protect innovation e.g. through legislation has been and still is a huge, cross-industry issue. While not specific to technology, the energy put into lawsuits in this sector is disproportional, resulting in a loss of focus on the user, the one who ultimately keeps the value chain alive. Today's ecosystems are more concerned about themselves than the user, and more than often users are used to fight ecosystem battles.

Here is an easy (and maybe unfair?) way to demonstrate the type of positioning that does not serve the user. This time using Google as an example. Google has always been the place to go for open APIs and capabilities for developers to create open services. Recently though, Google has been acting in a way that is confusing - to say the least - by killing off APIs it says it does not see the need to support. The list of such APIs gets longer, with the most high-profile one being XMPP (aka Jabber protocol). The new Google unified Hangouts are great, but Google discontinuing XMPP implies restrictions in openness for messaging across communities. There is no doubt that it will get more difficult to work with Google services. The Verge article Pick your poison: messaging will be fragmented, expensive, or locked-in is a very succinct summary of the issue.

Putting everything together, the move towards a world of self-contained, non-interoperable ecosystems has accelerated. Cooperation and its euphemistic synonym of coopetition is absent. It is a sad realisation that, beyond the hype, the only evolution that happened since the Walled Garden model is that the garden is now a park with more attractions, that gives a discount for consumers in return for their privacy details and the subsequent exploitation opportunity.

Looking carefully at the current moves in the industry shows that the protective walls around ecosystems are rising by the day. The good news is that this behaviour is usually an indication that the next disruption is around the corner.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

The Verge: Pick your poison: messaging will be fragmented, expensive, or locked-in.

Please observe our Terms of Use with respect to Trademarks. In particular, all trademarks mentioned in this article are property of their respective owners.

WHAT IF PRIVACY WENT OPEN-SOURCE

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on July 6, 2013

Not so long ago the title of this article would have sounded crazy. "Why would anyone make their private data freely available?" I hear you ask. The answer is that while we might have not consciously decided to do so, our private data is already out there for everyone to read:

• Governments have, since long, access to our private communications, be it voice, text, or information transferred over the internet. Lawful interception as it is called, is about obtaining communications network data pursuant to lawful authority for the purpose of analysis or evidence. However in some cases - like the recent PRISM / NSA scandal - our data lands to the hands of officials in foreign countries. Officials we have not legitimated with our vote.

• Since the beginning of the internet and the inception of the "free internet" mythology, our private data is gathered, analysed, and sold by search engines, online shops, social networks, payment services providers, etc. Every account you ever created online works that way. Our data is used to target us with advertising, recommending and even predicting what we do next. You guessed it: If you use something for free, you are the product for sale.

• Our private data is gathered and sold even when we have not created an account. Even if you do not have a fidelity card at a supermarket, your data is still gathered, analysed and used to create a profile of yourself and your buying habits. The reason: you paid with a credit card. In some countries, like the UK, every time you vote, the electoral roll is updated. The information therein can then be purchased subsequently by principally anyone, giving them access to your name, address, etc. and making it easy for them to cross-reference other information sources to figure out your phone number, etc.

I will assume you are convinced by now that our private data is already out there for everyone to read. Where we live, what we like, what we buy, where we are physically at a point in time, etc. By our choice, or laziness to read the Privacy and Terms of Use we sign up for.

Let me now address the main point i.e. what if all of our private data would be made open-source? Simplistically, think of a database accessible by everyone, which would allow anyone to ask questions and receive answers about everybody else. This is not theoretical: in Sweden tax offices have public terminals available where, providing you have a person's details, you can look up a person's income. This is part of Sweden's open information ethos (and helps prevent tax evasion).

So the step to democratizing privacy data is not that big after all. The key question remains to be answered: What if privacy went open-source? Here are some initial thoughts:

• The advertising business model would have to be reinvented as owning user information would become worthless overnight. Advertisers would not need to make deals with search engines, social networks, etc. to learn about us. As a result, some of the most-used, advertising-funded services today would collapse. Costs would still be there to operate

that database, but those are minuscule in comparison to today and, as in Sweden's case, could be managed by the government for the people.

- Security as we know it today could not rely anymore on such data as postcode, date of birth, etc. (currently used by banks to authenticate customers). Instead, it would have to rely on uniqueness. Think iris recognition: everyone would know you have blues eyes, but it is the uniqueness of your iris structure that proves it is you. This means that instead of entering passwords, the log in of the future could comprise a user performing a function that uniquely proves his identity. Fraud would become more difficult as performing a function at login time requires the person to be online, whereas hacking a password database does not.

- With privacy data fully democratized and accessible to everyone, it will become far more important who acquires the information first. This is by the way a model that already exists today: news companies and stock markets already operate on the principle of knowing first to achieve competitive advantage, as in the internet era we live in, all news and market data are rapidly accessible to everyone. Reporting on a story after someone else did, is not news after all.

As a result a new privacy business model could immerse, as you and I might decide to charge for answering specific questions, or maintaining and keeping our information up-to-date. This is not futuristic thinking: some companies employ a pre-cursor reward model already today.

Summarizing, our private data is already out there for everyone to read. By our choice or laziness to read the Privacy and Terms of Use we sign up for. Therefore, our options on the way forward are simplistically two-fold:

We can consciously decide if and when to use our privacy to pay for a service, and actively de-register from all accounts of services we do not use, asking for our data to be permanently deleted.

We can consciously decide to focus on what make us unique and accept that everything else is freely available. The open-source model has proven to be resilient against abuse, and it is therefore the model the author recommends as the basis for such a scenario.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

UK gathering secret intelligence via covert NSA operation.

Instagram reminds us that we are the product for sale.

How supermarkets get your data - and what they do with it.

Barclays to sell customer data.

If you're not paying, you're the product - so why not get some cashback?

Please observe our Terms of Use with respect to Trademarks. In particular, all trademarks mentioned in this article are property of their respective owners.

NEOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

BIG DATA, ANALYTICS, ACTIONABLE BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on July 19, 2013

In the search for evidence to enable informed business decisions Big Data, Analytics and Actionable Business Intelligence are frequently used terms. In this article we look behind the terminology and what it actually means for your business.

According to Wikipedia, the term Big Data refers to a collection of data sets so large and complex that it requires specialized tools in order to capture, curate, store, search, share, transfer, analyse, and visualize. We prefer this definition over the "Volume, Velocity, Variety, Veracity" definition by Gartner and others, as it better describes the operational aspects of Big Data. Diverging from it, we prefer to categorize analysis and visualization as part of Analytics.

Big Data and Big Data Analytics have become part of the CIO vocabulary and, when the projected financial returns justify it, the CIO agenda. The reasoning is simple: being able to rapidly answer critical questions and / or statistically predict answers to such questions based on analysis of a vast amount business data can create an unfair advantage over competition.

Think, for example, the benefits a supermarket could reap by predicting what customers would buy at particular point in time based on analysis of historical purchasing data.

This brings us to the creation of Actionable Business Intelligence which is the main reason for considering the employment of Big Data and Analytics. Actionable Business Intelligence is about deriving insights from the answers delivered by Analytics on Big Data, to enable the creation of executable plans to deliver new or improved business benefits. The key phrases here are "deriving insights", "executable plans" and "delivering business benefits". You will note that all these activities encompass organisational work beyond the automatic data processing and analytical number crunching.

Let us dive deeper into two key areas:

• Human Intelligence
Even after Big Data and Analytics have performed the processing, it is absolutely crucial to employ common sense and a critical view on the delivered results. In our

supermarket example, even if the Analytics would say that customers would be buying product X, it could very well be that, because of a recent event Y, the preferred product for customers is now Z. With our current technology, it is only humans that can prevent such misleading conclusions and it could be perilous for a business to think otherwise. The very insightful article Being Digital Demands You Be More Human explains why.

• Execution Timeliness With our lives, businesses, and social fabric being in constant transformation the lifetime and validity of business insights has been dramatically reduced i.e. uncovered insights need to be applied directly if they are to create competitive advantage. This raises the question if today's organisations are able to operate in such a real-time mode. Is the yearly frequency of a strategy development process adequate to ensure agility? Can a sourcing model based on 6-months pre-order cycle capture world-market opportunities? We believe and would advise that introducing Big Data and Analytics capabilities

NEOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

16

must go hand-in-hand with an organisational review to optimize the company's ability to execute on insights.

Summarizing
• having a Big Data and Analytics Infrastructure in place is a necessary but not sufficient condition towards acquiring Actionable Business Intelligence. Human Intelligence i.e. common sense and a critical view are still mandatory components.
• Big Data and Analytics alone cannot deliver business agility. To secure Timeliness from insights generation to execution, it is advisable to review, determine and implement an appropriate organisational structure.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

Big Data Definitions: Wikipedia, Gartner.

Analytics Definitions: Wikipedia, Gartner.

HBR: Being Digital Demands You Be More Human.

A PRIMER TO BUILDING YOUR START-UP INFRASTRUCTURE

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on September 24, 2013

"You can be sure that when you have come up with a great idea, at least 10 other people in the world came up independently with the same great idea. The difference will be who is going to make it happen first".

This is probably the most tough, disheartening and, at the same time, honest and empowering piece of advice any aspiring entrepreneur can ever receive. Whatever the idea, it is the execution that differentiates you from the competition. In this Insights article we will therefore focus on examples of tools that can help you be the first one out off the starting blocks. These tools are available mostly at no cost and are easy to deploy for the technology enthusiast. They won't make you idea a better one, but they will save you time and money, accelerating your execution, while safeguarding your financial resources.

Despite all the "freebies" we are going to list, in our opinion, there are areas no entrepreneur can afford to neglect, and every entrepreneur should invest time and money in. These areas include branding (logo, business cards, sales collateral), financial (accounting), legal (contracts, terms and conditions) and business advice (mentoring and coaching). We know from experience that failure in any of these areas can critically damage, or even break a business. After all, the first impression counts, you want to make money, good contracts make good friends, and good advice is priceless (we are biased).

In the remaining part of the article we will focus on your daily routine as an entrepreneur and how available tools can safeguard your budget and release productive time for you to spend with customers developing your idea.

- BEING REACHABLE: CALLS & MOBILE DATA
Starting out as an entrepreneur, reaching out to customers and being reachable to receive their calls on you mobile phone will be(co me) part of your life. Previously a significant cost, calling and surfing the internet on a mobile is now possible at minimal cost. If you live in the United Kingdom the Freedom tariff from OVIVO is available for £0/

month, giving you 150 minutes of voice, 250 texts, and 500MB of data. If you live in Sweden, Fogg Mobile offers a data-only SIM with a 1GB bundle, with roaming across UK, and Denmark at 0 SEK/month.

- FINDING & SECURING YOUR START-UP NAME
Finding a name for your new business can be a daunting task. Thankfully, many have tried before and some have written down the steps you need to take. Check the very complete compendium from Mashable. If you can not wait, try Instant Domain Search, a free service that instantly checks domain name availability. We would also strongly recommend registering the name of your new company as a trademark. In the UK, make sure to visit Intellectual Property Office which provides the ability to search registered trademarks before applying, or engaging a patent lawyer.

- BUILDING A PRESENCE: WEB HOSTING & WEBSITE
With the perfect start-up name in hand, it is important to register your domain fast - you do not

want the other 10 people to beat you. Fortunately, one.com offers a comprehensive package at no cost in the first year. Install Word-Press or the equally well supported Joomla, add Google Analytics and you have the ingredients needed to get you going with an initial website. If not done already, this is a good time to start thinking about branding, and investing in a professional designer to create the logo and visual identity for your company.

• EMAIL, CALENDAR, INTERNET TELEPHONY & WEB CHAT
Get Thunderbird and install the Lightning add-on. Install Skype. To let customers engage with you while they browse your new website, use LiveChat for Start-ups (hint: choose "Get Startup Tools" in the "select the incubator" drop-down menu).

• GETTING CLOUD INFRA-STRUCTURE
While you may have been working on your own laptop until now, companies like Amazon offer 12-month access to Amazon Web Services and Elastic Cloud (EC2) at no cost. Visit Infoworld

to get more information on how to make the most out of the Amazon offering. Google App Engine is another excellent choice, offering "up to 1 GB of storage and enough CPU and bandwidth to support an efficient app serving around 5 million page views a month, absolutely free". Finally, have a look at Microsoft BizSpark for "Developer tools, support, and training to build apps & scale your business, and technology to get you in the cloud". Rather than taking those examples for granted, ask for expert advice on what makes sense for your app / software product and what will be financially appropriate when your business scales.

• MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS & CONTENT: CRM & ECM
Equipped with your online presence, you existing engagement with customers and partners will accelerate, and you will be required to manage opportunities, as well as the documentation you will be exchanging. From a suite of many open-source Customer Relationship Management tools, the community edition of SugarCRM is a favorite for

many. As far as Enterprise Content Management is concerned, the community edition of Open-DocMan is a solid choice. We learned that the key to increase the effectiveness of those tools is proportional to your discipline in entering the data.

• ENGAGING & COLLABORATING
Whether to optimise working with remote members of your team or reaching out to your customers, collaboration tools are key. Google Drive is an one-stop-shop when it comes to sharing all kinds of documents. A very generous 15GB of storage across all Google services differentiates it substantially from offerings like Dropbox (2GB) and Box (5GB). For working with customers, screen sharing tools like join.me require no setup from customers, and offer a hassle-free experience. For resilience reasons (e.g. backup) we would always advise to use at least 2 cloud drives. At this point you should be thinking about good Non-Disclosure Agreements, solid contracts. Get legal advice.

NEOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

• EMAIL MARKETING
You have news that are relevant and helpful to your customers? You have asked your customers if they are interested to receive such news from you, and have evidence of their positive reply? Then the free version of Mailchimp gives you the ability to send up to 12,000 emails per month to up to 2,000 recipients at no cost. Alternatively, get the very popular and open-source phpList.

Summarizing
Every entrepreneur needs to decide where to spend their resources (time and money) when building up a new business. Choosing correctly determines speed of execution and thus the probability of success.
In this article we listed examples of tools, available mostly at no cost, that can save time and money while building and running the infrastructure for a new start-up.
We believe branding, financial, legal and business advice are areas no entrepreneur can afford to neglect, and every entrepreneur should invest time and money in.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

For the avoidance of doubt, Neos Chronos are not affiliated with, and have no financial interest in any of the companies mentioned in this article. All names and trademarks mentioned herein are the property of their respective owners. While reasonable effort was made to ensure correctness on the publication date, the information is provided on an "as-is" basis and can not replace a detailed review. Please observe the Neos Chronos Terms of Use.

Calls & Mobile Data: OVIVO, Fogg Mobile

Finding & Securing your Start-Up Name: How to name you start-up, Instant Domain Search, Trademarks, Trademark Search.
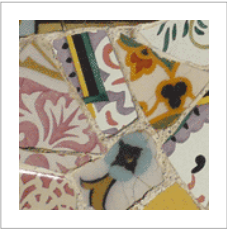
Web Hosting & Website: one.com, WordPress, Joomla, Google Analytics

Email, Calendar & Internet Telephony & Web Chat: Thunderbird, Lightning, Skype, LiveChat

Getting Cloud Infrastructure: Amazon, Google App Engine, Microsoft BizSpark

CRM & ECM: SugarCRM, OpenDocMan

Collaboration: Google Drive, Dropbox, Box, join.me

Email Marketing: Mailchimp, phpList

19

PUTTING BEST PRACTICES INTO CONTEXT

by Dr. Thomas Papanikolaou on November 06, 2013

A best practice, according to Wikipedia, is a "method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark". This definition exemplifies one of the approaches to defining best practices which usually emphasise a combination of the following aspects:

- reusable functionality e.g. through idea & knowledge databases
- method / process optimisation e.g. through benchmarking
- innovation & transformability e.g. by motivating replicability across many areas

Further important aspects exist as well. For example, in his 2010 talk The Myth of Best Practices, Diego Piacentini describes Amazon's emphasis on the aspect of business model uniformity by stating: "In our business model everything is equal unless proven with data that it needs to be different".

With our lives, businesses, and social fabric in constant transformation, it is a key observation that the lifetime and validity of best practices is rapidly diminishing. For example

- Manufacturing has seen a lot of optimisation in terms of materials and processes. With the introduction of 3D Printing which current best practices are still applicable, which can be evolved, which need to be completely discarded?
- Search-Engine Optimisation (SEO) has been the main process to enhance web presence visibility through actions that increase its relevance to specific keywords, and achieve higher ranking with search engines. With Google moving away from keywords and towards natural language search, which SEO best practices are still valid, which need to be changed, and which ones become irrelevant?

The insight resulting from these observations is that best practices have to be reformulated and implemented in a way that acknowledges the new, changing, and often real-time context we live in. A transferable example of how this can be accomplished is found in telecommunications technology and Self-Organising Networks (SON). SONs is an automation technology desi gned to make the planning, configuration, management, optimisation and healing of mobile radio access networks simpler and faster. In operation, mobile network base stations will regularly self-optimise parameters and algorithmic behaviour in response to observed network performance and radio conditions. The SON best practice lies in an iterative, data-driven, self-optimising, real-time approach. Diametrically opposite to Amazon's approach, the SON operating model presumes constant change, unless data proves it is not required.

A "NEW" DEFINITION.

In this new context, a best practice is an iterative execution of a method on a data set, delivering new data sets that are subsequently used to improve the method and refine the initial data set. In other words a best practice is a function of data, method, process, perpetually iterated to create more accurate data, a better method and a more optimised process. More and more, such iterations need to be executed in real-time.

NEOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

This definition makes clear that
- a best practice is only best at a specific point in time, within a specific knowledge set and a given method / process.
- a best practice requires a learning loop and repeated execution to remain best.
- the ability to execute a best practice is as important as the underlying method or process.

The latter is a frequently neglected yet highly significant aspect: to transfer a best practice from A to B without loss, B must have the ability to execute the iterations with the same level of skill as the originator A. Coming back to the The Myth of Best Practices, this is the reason why Amazon in 2010 decided to own the logistics of the last mile delivery in China, but relied on well-established logistic companies in the US.

BEST PRACTICES 2.0

The tools to implement best practices according to the new definition are readily available. We previously touched briefly upon those while discussing Big Data, Analytics, Actionable Business Intelligence. By applying Big Data and Analytics methods on accumulated knowledge (e.g. idea & knowledge databases, supply process chains, etc.) it becomes possible to enhance existing practices with a feedback and learning loop, that will allow for optimisation at every subsequent iteration.

Here are two long-existing examples that demonstrate how Big Data and Analytics are applied to implement the "new" best practices definition (albeit in a narrower context):

- Dynamic Tariffing is an adaptive pricing best practice, that is able to offer a mobile network customer a discount if there is unused capacity available at their current location in the network.
- Google real-time analytics is an example of a feedback and learning loop best practice. If and when an organisation uses this feedback to automatically and iteratively refine its marketing campaigns, this enables a self-optimising marketing campaign best practice. Disclaimer: to our current knowledge, optimisation is today often a manual task.

Introducing this way of operating into an organisation is a non-trivial task, as it requires establishing a culture focusing on perpetual optimisation. Carl-Henric Svanberg,

NEOSCHRONOS
ADVISE • DEMONSTRATE • INSPIRE

Chairman of BP and a former Ericsson CEO, instinctively captured the need for acknowledging perpertual change as he coined the statement "what brought us here, won't keep us here". Based on our experience, and the examples we listed in this article, we affirm his statement.

Summarising
• A best practice is an iterative execution of a method on a data set, delivering new data sets that are subsequently used to improve the method and refine the initial data set. In other words a best practice is a function of data, method, process, perpetually iterated to create more accurate data, a better method and a more optimised process. More and more, such iterations need to be executed in real-time.
• Big Data and Analytics can provide the enabling technology to enhance existing best practices with a real-time, learning loop.
• Implementing best practices in a real-time context mandates a culture and organisation built for perpetual optimisation.

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

For the avoidance of doubt, Neos Chronos are not affiliated with, and have no financial interest in any of the companies mentioned in this article. All names and trademarks mentioned herein are the property of their respective owners. Please observe the Neos Chronos Terms of Use.
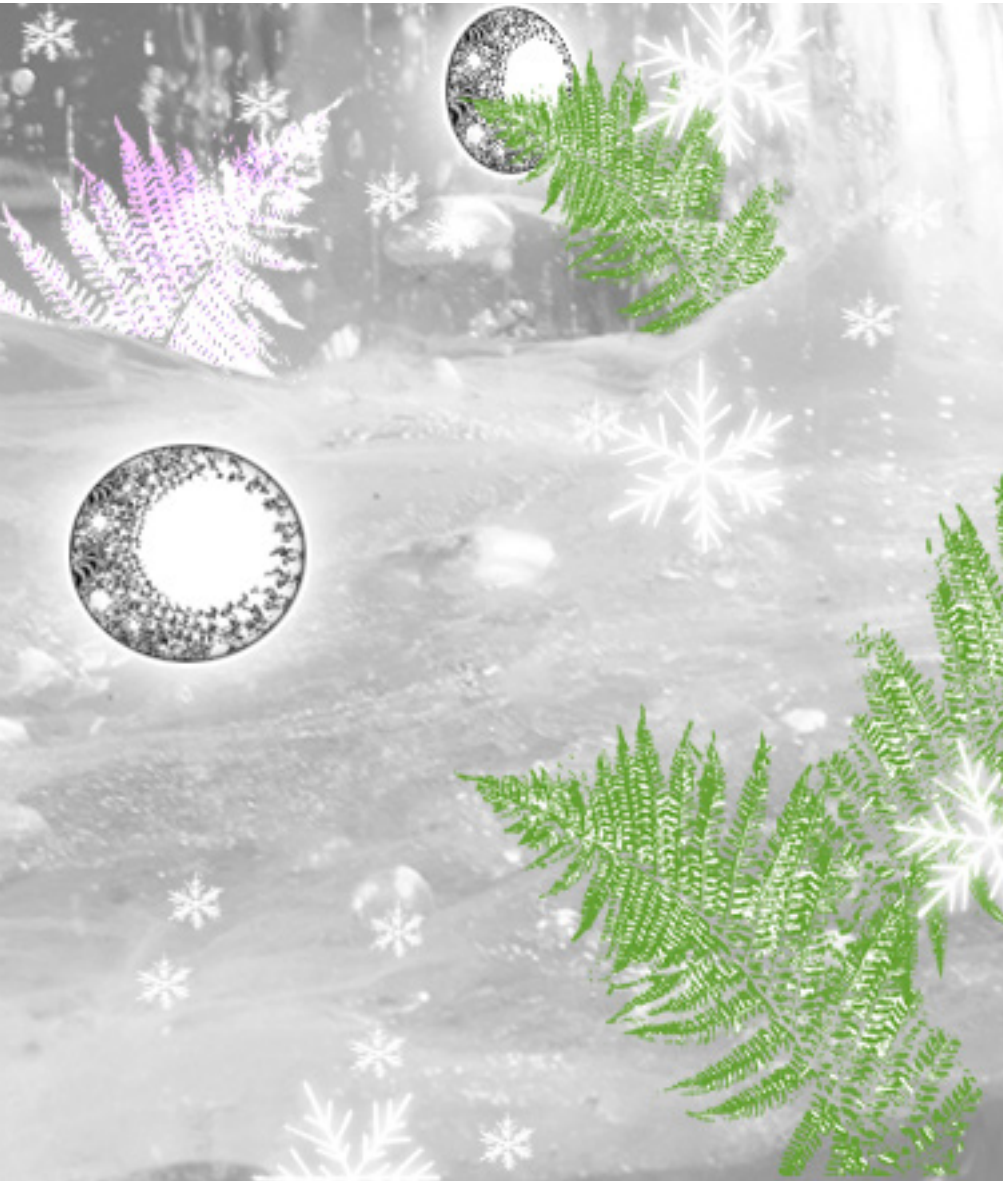
Wikipedia: Best practice, 3D Printing, Search-Engine Optimisation (SEO), Dynamic Tariffing, Carl-Henric Svanberg

Arnošt Veselý: Theory and Methodology of Best Practice Research: A Critical Review of the Current State

Diego Piacentini, Amazon: The Myth of Best Practices

Google: Analytics

We thank you for your support in our first year and hope for a continuing successful cooperation.

The Neos Chronos Team