

From the wisdom literature of innovation

On the love of innovation

A brief – yet hopefully insightful and humorous – digression reflecting on our engagement with innovation



When it comes to knowing how to identify breakthrough innovators (one aspect of “know who”), one of the top innovators I’ve met told me that he doesn’t look for aspiring innovators who want to **be** an innovator; instead, he looks for those who want to **do the work of** an innovator. One might conclude, then, that those who are infatuated with being recognized as an innovator – the lovers of self and innovation itself – are false prophets, while those who possess the features and exhibit the behaviors characteristic of breakthrough innovators – those gratified by doing the work of an innovator – are true, visionary innovators.

In addition to the wise and insightful observation from this exemplar innovator, I share here a brief, and hopefully amusing, ‘proof’ about the love of innovation.

Proof that the excessive love of innovation is evil

First, we recognize that breakthrough innovation requires time and resources (typically money):

$$\text{Innovation} = \text{Time} * \text{Money} \quad (1)$$

Also, we know and accept the old adage that time is money:

$$\text{Innovation} = \text{Money}^2 \quad (2)$$

And that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil:

$$\heartsuit \text{ Money} = \sqrt{\text{Evil}} \quad (3)$$

Therefore, we see that:

$$\heartsuit^2 \text{ Money}^2 = \text{Evil} \quad (4)$$

And, thus:

$$\heartsuit^2 \text{ Innovation} = \text{Evil} \quad (5)$$

So, we must conclude that: **“The excessive love of innovation is evil.”**

In contrast, I suggest that the best innovators demonstrate their love of customer, colleague, manager and shareholder simultaneously – doing what is best for each.

Think about it.

I’m taking a short break

Having written and posted sixteen essays over the past eight months, I plan to break to enjoy the Christmas holiday and re-populate the pipeline of essays. I expect to resume posting again in roughly the March timeframe.

Thanks and best wishes to all of you! ■

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‘On the Epistemology of Innovation: How Breakthrough Innovators Connect the Dots’ is a series of brief, occasional essays addressed to executives, managers, and technologists responsible for innovation in industry. Its purpose is to challenge readers to reflect broadly and deeply on the practice of innovation – in particular on how innovators come to know what to do today – in order to succeed commercially in the future. Essays are available without charge at the University of Illinois’ digital archive at <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/27667>. The discussion group at <http://epistemology-of-innovation.com> is a place to provide feedback and dialog with the author and others regarding these essays, as well as to register to receive notice of new essays as they are issued.