making
weconomy

COLLABORATIVE ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

powered by Logotel

05

INFO
INDIE
INTER:
RENEWING
INNOVATION

Open

Free

Infinite

Perpetual
Beta
Collective
Magazine

making weconomy

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05

INFO INDIE INTER: RENEWING INNOVATION

Logotel presents this Magazine to coincide with Weconomy's involvement in the TEDxBologna event "Exponential Innovation". For innovation is not (just) about technology; it is, above all, a question of values (and value). And innovating content (Info), innovating attitude (Indie), and innovating relationships (Inter) are three possible channels for our companies to add this value.

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Logotel is the service design company that shapes and drives business innovation in a collaborative way.
The company's team is made up of more than 120 people. It is located in Milan in 2,000 m2 of spaces in the former Faema factory plant.
The company is currently working with 50 clients, developing more than 70 different projects.
In 2012 Logotel trained more than 5,000 people; it also designed and managed 24 business communities that daily connect and deliver services and contents to more than 40,000 people.

INDICE

WHY

WE – THE CUTTING EDGE OF INNOVATION
HOW TO HELP PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES
MANAGE ACCELERATION

Google gives 13,000,000 hits in Italian about innovation. First up is Wikipedia, whose Italian version defines innovation as "the applied dimension of an invention or discovery". It goes on to say, "innovation concerns a process or product that ensures greater benefits or results through social progress, even if they are not always more effective or better than what went before. On the other hand, change that worsens social conditions is not innovation but regression."
We quote this throughout the meetings; it adorns the most important slides in our presentations; it forms the subtext for corporate-renewal programmes: innovation is one of the most used and abused of words, often becoming a mere label devoid of meaning. To mark our involvement at TED on 12/10/2013 on the theme of exponential innovation, we found it useful to reflect on the role of the "i" in innovation in the new economy, aided by various different viewpoints.

Let's begin with exponential innovation. Right now, everyone is talking about how technology accelerates the process and transforms every aspect of a product or service, including the processes that always used to underpin business organisations: production, managing people, raising capital, and customer relations. Today's customers buy in a different way (remember the third Weconomy Journal?); they use new technologies to live in a different way, to exercise more power over companies. In the past, only big businesses could innovate; now, as many structural barriers have come down, innovation is open even to individuals. Digital extends to all sectors, even those that are not digital, revolutionising the way we live. Exponential technology growth is a fact of life; as a result, WE today are

experiencing transformational, not just evolutionary, change. People nowadays adopt technological innovations to do old things in new ways; future generations, who will have adopted and internalised technology, will do new things in new ways, and the transformation then will be even more exponential. The world is in a state of transformation, we know, but it has never changed this fast before.

So what role does a person have in such a state of flux? How can one individual handle that kind of complexity? In other words, in a context of exponential innovation, is the individual a constraint or a resource? (We are talking primarily about our generation, not the one that is coming into the world now with "exponential" already imprinted in its DNA.) Understanding change is no longer enough: we need to be part of it.

The individual is the cutting edge of exponential innovation. Unless we help "US as (exceptional) individuals" to be part of it, we shall not help "US as businesses, US as community", "US as economy, US as society". We shall be able to observe change but without being part of it, without leaving a meaningful mark of our own, something of value to us, all of us, for our common destiny – remember?

How can we accelerate this process? How can we be part of the transformation and not be left marginalised? How can we overcome our fears and develop new awarenesses and skills? How can we complete ourselves? How can we reposition ourselves as individuals, as companies? How can we INNOVATE? Remember what Wikipedia said? Innovation is a social act; it must

Cristina Favini
Strategist &
Manager of Design Logotel

make things better. But if we do not involve people in the process, then innovation will not be "adopted", and we shall be unable to make progress. So we must ask ourselves how to help people, and hence companies, to become part of innovation. It is a hobby horse of mine not only as a designer but also as a Logotel person.

How, then, can we refresh our language to aid people's understanding in an accelerated environment? How can we "package" content or innovate our way of exchanging INFOrmation? If we do not understand, if we do not digest things, then we shall not participate in the renewal process, especially at a time when we are all increasingly having to grapple with INTERcompany, INTERnational and multicultural "accelerated forums" and manage them together and at the same time, where words and information often obstruct communication and impede progress. How can we help people and businesses to keep on top of this acceleration and go back to producing their ideas and content "IND(I)Ependently"? How can we assist them in developing broad, supportive alliances to help them grow, to develop open and thus all-permeating innovation?

Maybe the answer lies in that living catalyst that we call "weconomy", in which we continue to believe – our ability to cooperate and to foster synergies with others. More than industry-specific competences, then, what counts nowadays is also and above all the relationship dimension: our capacity to exchange, to complete one another, to work with other people to VISUALISE OURSELVES AS PART OF THIS

TRANSFORMATION, TO BE THERE AND TO KEEP ON INNOVATING.

If we always used to think of working together as an act of altruism, perhaps today we ought to realise that it is actually (also) an act of "egoism", one of the few ways we have of being part of change and avoiding marginalisation, of surviving TOGETHER (to quote the TV series Lost, "live together or die alone").

So innovation cannot be enacted in a vacuum, only together. Our responsibility is to foster innovation, to make it our own, so that it can improve our lives, as Wikipedia reminds us. And that is why INDIE, INTER and INFO are the first 3 "i"s for RENEWING innovation.

Read on.

"WE" ARE WHAT RENEWS INNOVATION

Exponential transformation

We are living in complex, fluid times, where boundaries blur, where we talk no longer of competition but of hypercompetition, not of analogue and digital but of hybrid solutions. More than evolution, what we are experiencing is a sea change, a transformation.

We: the cutting edge of maximum acceleration

What role does a human being have in a world like this? How can one individual handle that kind of complexity? In other words, in a context of exponential innovation, is the individual a constraint or a resource?
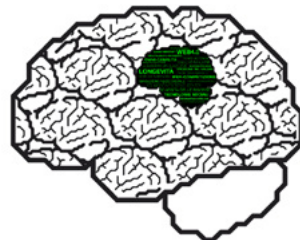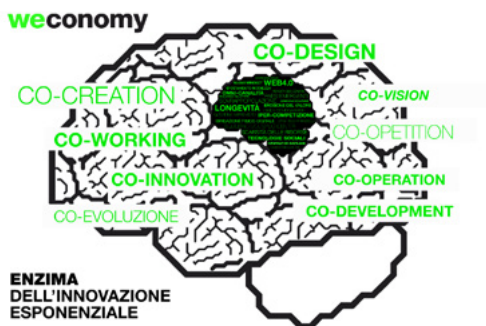

We: people, companies, society, communities

Understanding change is not enough (any more); we need "to be inside it". Unless we help "US as people" to be part of it, we shall not help "US as businesses", "US as society", "US as community" (with a common destiny) to leave our own mark, something that has meaning, something of shared value for everyone.

Weconomy: a living catalyst for innovation?

Maybe the answer lies in that living catalyst that we have called "weconomy", our ability to cooperate and to foster synergies with others. More than industry-specific skills, in fact, what counts today is also and above all the (INTER)relational component, our capacity to exchange, to share, to work together.

"Live Together, Die Alone"

Whereas, in the past, we could still afford to think that cooperating was an act of "altruism", perhaps now we ought to realise that it is actually (also) an act of "egoism", as the only way we have of being part of change and avoiding marginalisation, of surviving TOGETHER.

"We" are what renews innovation

In today's hyper-accelerated world, therefore, innovation can no longer be a solitary activity but must be pursued collaboratively. And each of us is responsible for embracing this innovation completely, because "'We' is a place where you cannot hide."

"I am large, I contain multitudes"

What tools can we use? With the Magazines project, our modest aim is to offer a new alphabet for collective enterprise: from values like Auto, Beta and Co to the Design approach, tools for Empowerment, Feedback and Gamification and the concept of a real Human (R)evolution.

Share and win

The weconomy can spring only from individuals, from each of us. What does that teach us for the future? That those who divide, lose; those who share, win. In economics as in innovation; in the "micro" space of our personal everyday world as in the "macro" of our whole society. Be We!

INNOVATION FAQS
AN IMAGINARY DIALOGUE ON THE VALUES OF INNOVATION

Q.   **A.**

Innovation: isn't that rather a broad subject?

Absolutely: if you search for "innovation" in Google, you get something like 250 million hits. Ironically so, as the word "innovating" is supposed to mean "altering the established order of things to create new ones from them." Nonetheless, those 250 million webpages are a yardstick for two things: the information overload that we are exposed to every day, like it or not, and the pace of change, for how is it humanly possible for us to keep up with this ever-faster charge towards the "new"?

Q.   **A.**

How can we pin it down, then? What kind of "innovation" are we talking about?

Look at it this way: what kind of innovation AREN'T we talking about (not here and now, anyway)? Above all, the kind of innovation that instinctively springs to mind: technological. Given that the notorious Moore's Law – which for half a century has said that computer performance grows exponentially, doubling every two years – may be about to expire (perhaps in 2020, according to the latest estimates), technology innovation is now driven by just a few players and is, in fact, the "context" for everyone else to reckon with.

Q.   **A.**

"Keeping up" with technological innovations is pointless, then?

No, on the contrary: it's virtually essential. But a company does not "innovate" if it keeps doing the same things as ever, "only" differently; real innovation happens when a company uses new (technological and other) means effectively to do new things. In other words, innovation is not an upgrade to download and plug in to update your old operating system. If anything, it is a natural catalyst to set to work organically with what you already have "in-house", to trigger and accelerate new processes and dynamics, even new business models.

Q.

So where is this innovation that you "do" rather than "have done to you"? I want some of that!

A.

We do not claim to have ready-made recipes or one-size-fits-all solutions. Our modest proposal, at least in this issue, is to work on three potential innovation drivers among thousands. These are business values that, with a little verbal imagination, we believe can help companies to generate value again: I for Info, I for Indie, and I for Inter.

Q.

Info, Indie, Inter: sounds good. But what do they mean, exactly?

A.

It's all about three attitudes, three skills, three new "competencies", even, that we can "coach" – hand in hand with the "Auto, Beta, Co" triad from our Making Weconomy Journal #1 – at both personal and organisational levels to enhance the collective propensity for innovation in our companies.

Q.

How about a practical example? Let's start with Info.

A.

"Info" means devising and sharing valuable content with our internal or external customer. Innovating content is not about transposing old stories from one medium to another but telling new stories that are substantial enough to survive the vicious circle of overload and break into the virtuous one of "cognitive surplus" (in Clay Shirky's terms).

Q.

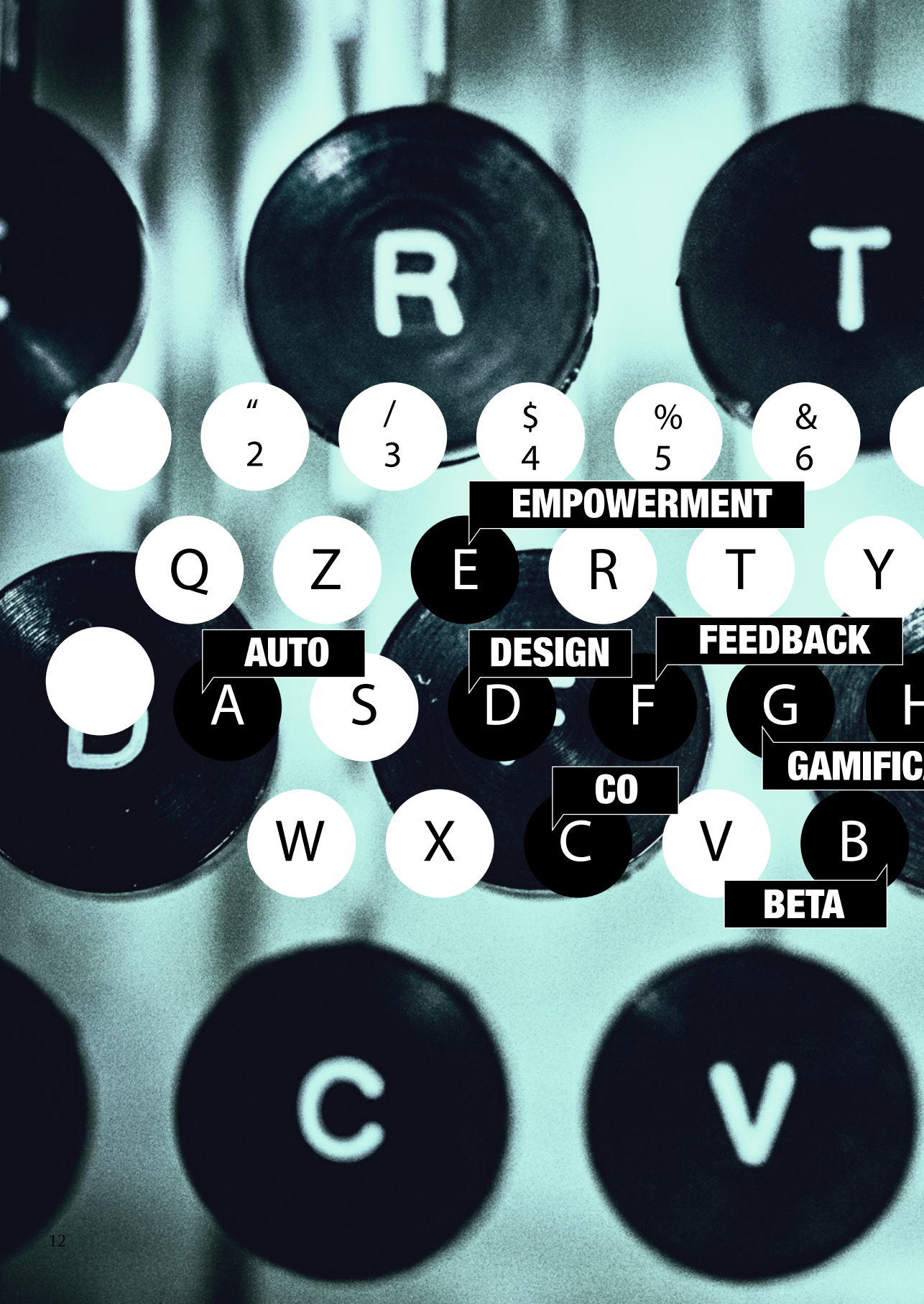"Where are you heading if you haven't got content?" Agreed. And "Indie"? Odd word that it is.

A.

"Indie" means many things, maybe too many. It means autonomy and self-starting – because if the "context", drat it, won't give me time, then I'll make time myself. It means creating value through approaches off the traditional models' radar (to take one example from many: crowdfunding). It means assimilating the lesson that the "makers" movement is teaching us: if the market doesn't offer what we want, so much the better – we'll do it ourselves.

Q.

OK: but doesn't this In-dependence conflict with the third "i", Inter(dependence)?

A.

No: they are two sides of the same coin. Indie does not mean "self-sufficiency", doing it yourself and that's it. On the contrary. The more "Indie" you are, the more you immerse yourself in a community of similar players to share resources, inspiration and skills with (an "ecosystem"). So "Inter", with all the adjectives that it can link to (inter-national, -cultural, -disciplinary, etc.), means acknowledging – once and for all – the existence of a new dimension of value: not just economic but also (and above all?) relational.

EMPOWERMENT

AUTO

DESIGN

FEEDBACK

GAMIFIC

CO

BETA

INFO/INDIE/INTER

HR

ATION

INFO

The collaborative enterprise treats content as central (once again). It uses new tools and disciplines to shape, simplify and help share useful and substantial but digestible information, both internally and with its clients.

INDIE

The collaborative enterprise has an independent attitude. It seeks and produces value first of all internally (think "A" for Auto) and uses criteria of creativity, affinity and shared purpose to select the players in its system of relationships.

INTER

The collaborative enterprise adopts smart approaches to scaling. If it elects to go global, it uses intercultural and interdisciplinary approaches, relocating itself in a dialogue with the other cultural, social and economic stakeholders in its new operating environment.

INFO-INDIE-INTER LINKOGRAPHY

"Why your Brain Craves Infographics"
neomam.com/interactive/13reasons/

The Russian Campaign according to Charles Minard: the mother of all infographics?
goo.gl/a45I98

The official site of the "infographics Galileo", Edward Tufte
edwardtufte.com/

FastCompany about the future of capitalism: indie, small and homegrown
goo.gl/Ef3ju6

Pinterest Board with "Indie Business" infographics and resources
goo.gl/FVsf7q

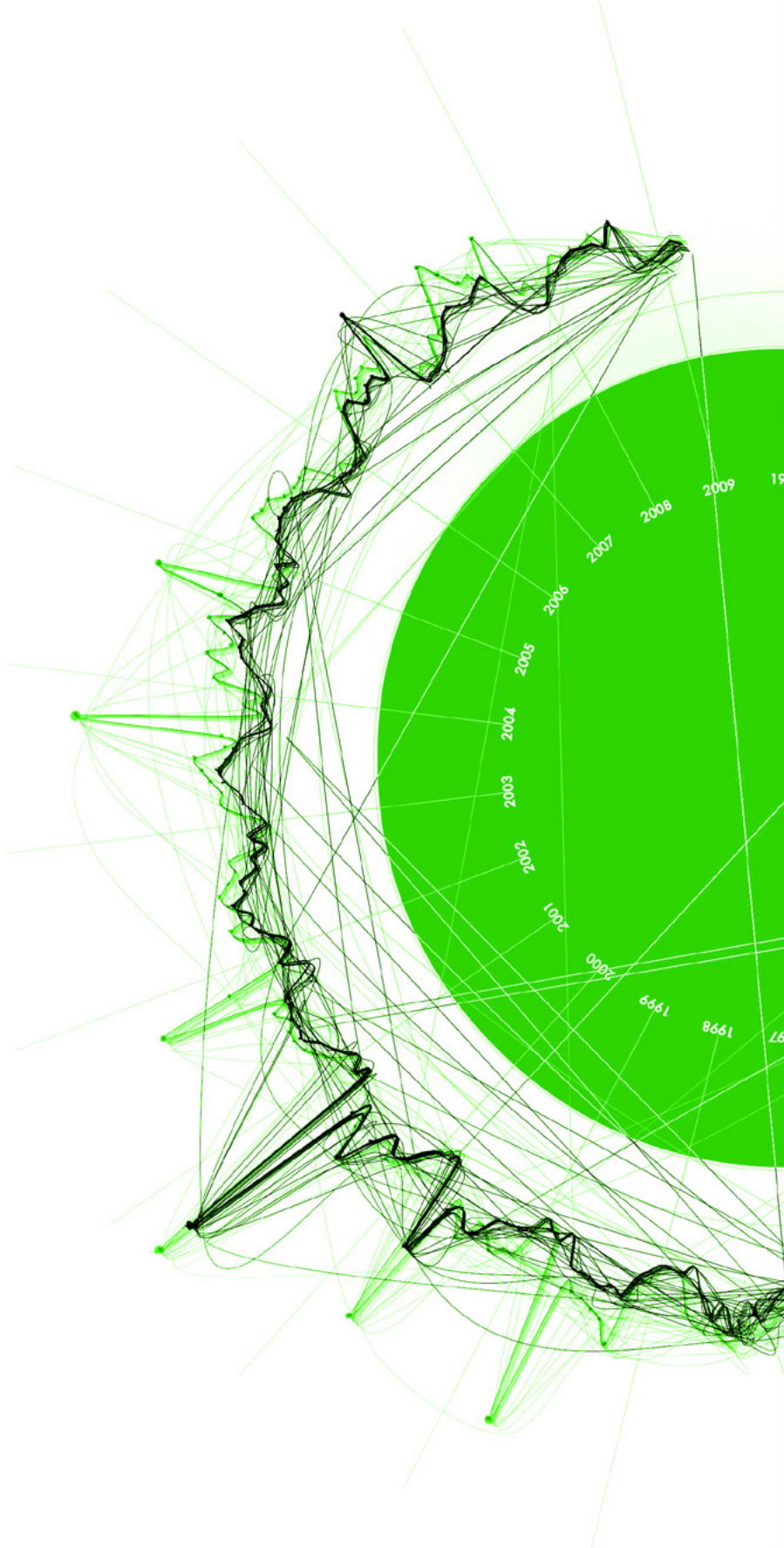The most successful creative indie projects on Kickstarter
goo.gl/8ZE4Dg

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Problem-Solving, a TED Talk by Jenny Kehl
youtube.com/watch?v=iS2J8TGVhw4

From Inter to Cross: the collaborative Cross Innovation Project
cross-innovation.eu/

Maybe the most complex, striking and inspirational internationalisation case: ISS
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Space_Station

INFO
wiki

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, Info (short for "information", from the Latin "in-formare", to shape or give form to) means an "awareness communicated or received about a particular fact or circumstance, that can resolve the uncertainty in it (…); the more uncertain an event, the more information is needed". Information and complexity, in other words, are directly proportional measures. No surprise, then, that from about the 1990s, our era has been dubbed variously "the Information Age" – to distinguish it from the earlier Industrial Age – or the "Age of Complexity". The transition point, clearly, coincides with the globalisation due to the internet and with the resulting digital revolution. The same point also marked a paradoxical inversion in the above definition: at least in perceptual terms, nowadays the increase in information often magnifies our uncertainty, rather than resolving it. This is the well-known phenomenon of Information Overload theorised back in 1970 by the futurist Alvin Toffler and recently given a web-2.0 revamp by authors like Nicholas Carr and Jaron Lanier. Between the apocalyptics and the "integrated" enthusiastic adopters, the solution may be somewhere in the middle: in certain "information forms" (from big data to information design) capable of creating value or simplifying complexity in economic and other spheres.

Want to know more? Read this book
Information Is Beautiful, David McCandless
(HarperCollins, 2010)

BELIEVE IT

THE NEW BIG (DATA) THING
NEW VALUE BEYOND
INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Luca Tremolada
Journalist
Il Sole 24 Ore

In 1989, Gartner analyst Howard Dresner decided that, from then on, "business intelligence" would embrace all the concepts and methods for making decisions using data. Dresner envisaged not only a new software family for companies but also an advanced methodology for processing information and turning it into knowledge. It was the 1990s. Companies were to become space stations; the managers, pilots commanding the business; the computers, dashboards for monitoring business performance. The buzzwords were "real time", "data mining" and "management control". The challenge was to reorganise processes, derive the operating metrics, and provide a representation that would be useful and comprehensible to decision-makers. These software tools won over some multinationals and large banking groups but were rather complex for most of the market. Nevertheless, they had the merit of doing in-depth work on the databases, the user interfaces, and the information/data archive. In effect, they laid the technological foundations for the process of opening up the databases that took root in 2009 when Tim Berners-Lee, one of the web's founding fathers, proposed the free exchange of data on the web. That year, politics and technology shared a vision. Access to the databases stimulated the development of applications to bring tangible benefits to the community, new-generation services for the public, new business opportunities for the private sector, and a promise of savings for government administrations. But information did not get the time to appreciate the potential of data. In the last decade, information overload has been at the root of the publishing industry crisis and the symptom of a different way of learning. That is, knowledge became digitalised too quickly, before the means of production were ready. In 2000, 25% of the information recorded worldwide was digital; 75% was analogue, on paper, film, magnetic plastic, and so on. In 2013, that 25-75 digital-analogue split is now 98-2. While companies were glimpsing the business potential of all this data, the culture industry became embattled in a rearguard action against the anarchic flow of news. The apocalypse was upon us, or so we were told. And then there was Dremel. Dremel is a scientific paper released by Google in 2010. It is available on the internet, if you fancy a browse (tinyurl.com/c8wdacz), but it does not make reassuring reading – not for everyone, at least. It explains how to search millions of gigabytes of information in fractions of a second. That study was analysed by many if not all the computer scientists, IT professionals, and experts now working on or leading start-ups to extract meaning and business from data. Big Data, now rightly considered the new big thing, owes everything to Dremel. For a small firm, it means being able to ask questions of your business that previously would have been prohibitively expensive. The advantage of being able to interrogate (several times a day) a market that is changing in real time, minute by minute, is a frontier worth 34 billion dollars worldwide, according to Gartner. That is another big number that has helped to bring order and a business approach to the chaos of the internet. Paradoxically, the onset of the big-data era has coincided with the end of information overload. It has given hope to an industry in search of order. It has offered the idea that data and database chaos can be interpreted, that there is an underlying structure that can generate value.

To be continued on weconomy.it

MAKE IT

HELP REMEDIES

Ethics, unique products, and resoundingly successful designs. That is what Help Remedies is all about. This New York drug company is famous for having upended the sales approaches and formalities of its reference market. It has done so through the portal helpineedhelp.com, whose merit lies in blending a disarmingly simple purchase experience with a purely graphical language, gamification principles, and entertainment for its visitors. The home page offers playful solutions to most of our everyday troubles, some accompanied by cheerful images, others by actual products featuring minimal design. Visiting helpineedhelp.com is so much fun that, when you have finished spending time or money there, you can't wait to share it with your friends, which makes it the hen that lays the golden egg in our social-media age.

AMERICAN EXPRESS

An interesting case of how content and information can turn into the best publicity strategy is OpenForum.com, the new portal created by American Express to get inside the entrepreneurial life of its clientele. "Exchange advice. Make smart decisions." is the project slogan. Indeed, once you register on the portal and join the community, you can seek advice, answer questions from other entrepreneurs, and read the business lessons from leading marketing, leadership and economics experts. Needless to say, the project has been a success, becoming one of the most noted case studies among the various companies that use content marketing as a tool for developing and extending their authority in primarily B2B contexts.

UBANK

We humans are naturally curious. Have you never secretly hankered to know how much your neighbours spend each month...? Or how much it would have cost to live in a different city? These are just some of the questions answered by People like U, the new service from Australian bank UBank, which can relate its customers' economic story by integrating big data and social media. Spending patterns, geographical area, age, gender, daily habits – these are just a handful of the pieces of information that are analysed and processed in the form of some surprisingly useful reports. Thus, you can find out, for instance, whether Melbourne or Sidney residents spend more on fashion or art, what are the most frequent purchases in town, and how to invest your savings as effectively as possible. It is all presented in infographic form.

The Help spot Cannes Grand Prix
http://goo.gl/HJePX

Open Forum platform
http://goo.gl/XgmOij

Money Box, UBank's YouTube channell
youtube.com/UBankMoneyBox

WECONOMY INSIGHT

OVERLOAD vs SCHEDULING
HOW TO "SHAPE" THE CONTENT

Antonella Castelli
Designer
Logotel

We are accelerating change in society at an exponential rate, so quickly that we cannot comprehend its true potential. We talk and we hear of hyperchoice, hypercompetition, hyperdynamics, hypercommunication, hypereverything … now hyperinformation. The amount of information in circulation increases continually (it has increased fivefold in the last 20 years) so fast as to be unsustainable by individuals or by society as a whole. This means we are bombarded with such vast quantities of data and information that we are overloaded. So how can we recognise what is conceptually important? How can we facilitate the filtration process? How can we break down the information into details without losing the big picture? Stop right there! Let's think for a minute. We need to start from the beginning, with a definition of information: the term derives from the Latin informatio(-nis), meaning "to shape the mind", and denotes a concept or idea. But what does "shaping" information mean? In a flood of information, information itself implodes. The notions expressed are more than a person can assimilate; hence, the process of "content scheduling" kicks in, to bring out the message to be conveyed. If the information has no message, there is no useful content. Without a message, without content, it's all a waste of time! So how can we shape the content? As a designer, that is the question I face every day, to ensure that the content and its vehicle provide genuine value to their users, be they a company board, a workshop team, or the end client. It is not an exercise in pure form but rather in how shaping the content (infodesign) must facilitate understanding of what we wish to convey, how it must simplify and enable the sharing of useful, concise and substantial information, especially via digital channels. Specifically, infodesign has the power to add value to the information, by creating a visual summary that emphasises the concepts' essence, relationships and dynamics on several levels. Being immersed in this work every day, I can safely say that infodesign is essential above all for collaborative working, such as in company teams involving different departments and skills. Why? Because when we need to explain to the group the outcome of a project – be it a business model, a format, a sales concept, a vision, a roadmap, or a project development, whether linear (a traditional approach working to a single goal) or otherwise – the language used must be comprehensible and digestible to all stakeholders. Infodesign lets us formulate a mind map to share. It lets us build a useful "memorandum" for defining a vision summarising the key concepts. Infographics, mind maps and storyboards are new and fluid models that support understanding, that encourage sharing of the message, and that foster collaborative working processes between company stakeholders on specific projects. In short, what infodesign offers a collaborative enterprise is the ability to combine form and content and to create an overall vision that is understandable and shared.

- This involves: "tidying up" and recognising the message to be conveyed, lending it form;
- formalising knowledge and communicating effectively with clients, companies and communities;
- having a shared language (even at international level) in the various work groups;
- building value around the business's content;
- and offering a systematic vision.

WECONOMY
SERVICE DESIGN **TOOLS**

INFOGRAPHIC DESIGN

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120
"Fanatic Collaborative
Magazine" realizzate

139
partecipanti
al Barcamp

104
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6
designer

WHAT

Data visualisation or information design consists in giving succinct visual form to a complex and disorganised body of knowledge. Its explosion on a "mass" scale as a discipline coincides in many ways with that of social media: the shorter our attention span, the more we need content that is substantive yet engaging and understandable at a glance.

WHY

- because we are physiologically hyperreceptive more to images than to words (our eye-brain system can understand an infographic in one tenth of a second);
- because, on average, we remember only 20% of what we read but as much as 80% of what we see;
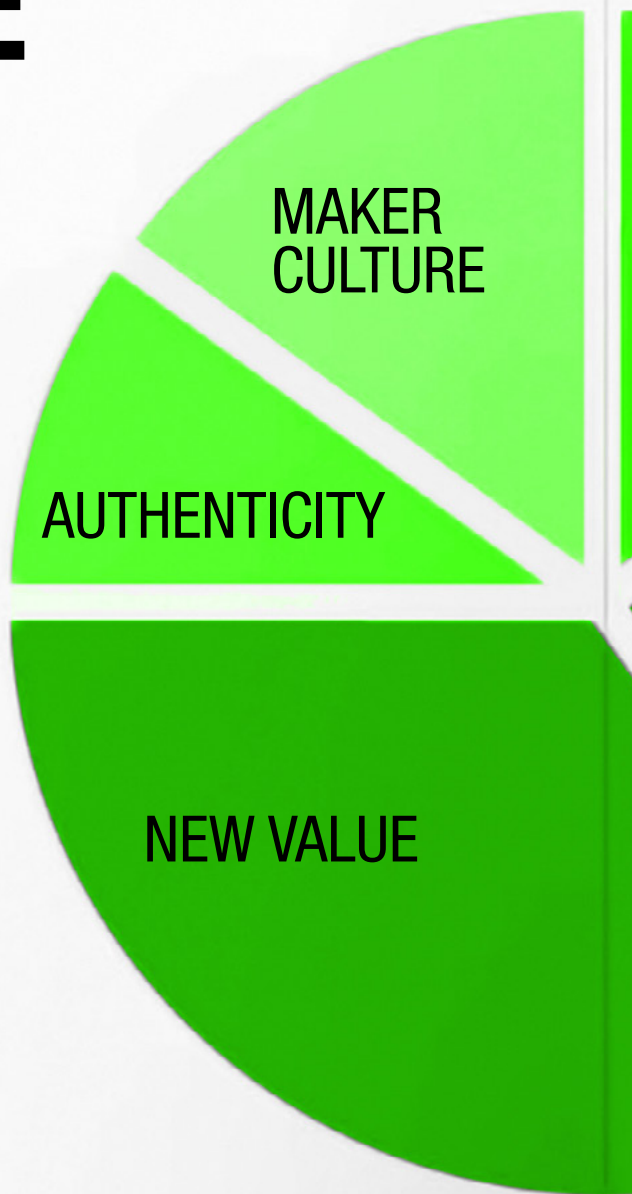- to survive an information overload of 34 GB per person every day!

WHEN

The complexity of today's problems, the need to break them down into details without losing the overall vision, the need to be "surprised" by unexpected interrelationships between elements, the benefit of retaining the storytelling element about the concepts or how they evolve, the need to share and to co-produce with others – from all this springs the urgent necessity to innovate our way of communicating and of shaping knowledge through information design.

HOW

- there are more and more increasingly sophisticated tools for processing data and information automatically and producing graphical information outputs (from Wordle for creating simple tag clouds to Vizify for shaping your CV), but art direction dedicated to information design is, in any case, always irreplaceable when the time comes to plan an actual product/service;
- infographics' visual telling also enables us to defuse tension: people stop using abstract language and begin to use the visual representation as an "environment" for the problem, to focus attention and to point things out, physically touching the very information that they are talking about.

INDIE
wiki

MAKER
CULTURE

AUTHENTICITY

NEW VALUE

SOCIALLY BASED

LOCAL FOCUS

According to Wikipedia, "Indie" (short for "independent") means "everything in the art arena that is outside the large mainstream industries." Hence indie cinema, indie music, indie videogames, and so on. It is a question purely of distribution, then, while also being a concept that is hard to circumscribe: where does the "indie" world end and the "mainstream industry" begin? The matter of what is and what is not "indie" is hotly debated, especially on the internet and in highly creative environments, like those mentioned. However, to get things in perspective, the discussion largely imitates that on what is and what is not a "start-up": is it only about time and size, of how many months a company has been in business and how many employees it has (tending to zero…)? Or is it a deeper issue, one that also concerns the inclination to innovation, the working style, the overall attitude, etc? And besides, indie and start-up are words that we increasingly hear in the same breath, so much so that the concept has now emerged of "indie capitalism": a new kind of creative, "post-global", "hyperurban" enterprise with much in common with what we call "weconomy". So the question is: what is "indie" really about, and how can we apply it to our company?

Want to know more? Read this book
Creative Intelligence: Harnessing the Power
to Create, Connect, and Inspire
Bruce Nussbaum (HarperCollins, 2013)

BELIEVE IT

DO YOU HAVE A BIG COMPANY? THEN REINVENT IT AS A (LEAN) START-UP
HOW TO TURN IDEAS INTO PLANS

Alberto D'Ottavi
Co-founder & CMO Blomming

The parallel between a big company and a small start-up may be hard to spot. Unless you too are tired of having meeting after meeting to discuss plans that take years to come to market. Or perhaps you have read the now-famous "The Lean Startup" by Eric Ries. A cult book among digital entrepreneurs, it has gained devotees over recent years in numerous different fields, including enterprise settings. No surprise, for many of Ries's case studies do indeed concern big companies. He talks primarily of "Intrapreneurship", showing how to boost efficiency and productivity, thus reducing time-to-market and costs. And yes, having fewer meetings helps, but there's more to it than that.

"Lean" as in "Toyota". In his book, Ries makes two interesting and unexpected connections. The first is to apply Toyota's Lean Production model to the management processes of a start-up. Of course, it means continually reviewing and improving internal processes. That's the bit we knew already. The interesting idea is to take the industrial production process, mix it with software-development methodologies, and emerge with a new methodology not just for building start-ups but also for managing new projects/products/services in big companies more effectively. The secret? Simple: split the project into many business scenarios; invent sub-products that are as small, economical and quick to make as possible (Minimum Viable Product); and release them immediately on to the market, to monitor take-up. And repeat. Iterate the process until you find the right fit. The least you can achieve is that meetings become more enjoyable: rather than ruminating for hours over which opinion should prevail, you gear up to test them all. Ries discusses the case of a large company that went from 15 to 300 new products a year, using this method.

"Learn" as in "Business". Ries's other theoretical leap forward is to change the focus from business to … learning. It sounds risky, but it is actually the crucial point: a start-up is, above all, an experiment. It is a human institution designed to bring a new product or service to market amid conditions of extreme uncertainty. Fundamentally, a start-up is a catalyst that turns ideas into products.

Every single day, every single moment of a start-up's life is dedicated to iterating the build–measure–test–analyse cycle, to understand if the product is right, if there is a potential market for it, if the price is right, or if some specific feature needs tweaking, etc. And this must be done at great speed, because resources are scarce, money likewise, and the original idea behind the start-up must be proven as fast as possible.

In the end, a lean start-up is an organisation that develops an unknown product in an unknown market, for unknown clients.

In these uncertain economic times, when it is hard to pin down trends and to get forecasts right, when in the space of a few months innovations can disrupt markets established for decades, perhaps this is a perfect description of a large company, too?

MAKE IT

AUTOMATTIC

Automattic is the parent company that developed WordPress, the world's most popular Content Managed System for creating and managing websites. WordPress is used by over 72 million blogs, magazines and portals (as at May 2012), including such major authorities as CNN, Time, TED and NBC. Working at Automattic means being part of a 190-strong team that does its bit to improve the web experience for billions of people, from visitors and writers to webmasters and content curators. The passion and skills of these web- and information engineers has given everyone the chance to create their own online space for showing and promoting their portfolio, spreading their ideas, and expressing themselves to the full on the web. Whereas setting up a website used to be a complex, costly operation, it is now accessible to all. And part of the credit surely goes to the indie-developers at Automattic.

OUYA

Ethics, morality and an unbridled passion for videogames. These are the values of the production team behind OUYA, a new console whose primary merit is to have raised a whopping 8 million dollars during its fundraising campaign on kickstarter.com in a single month. OUYA is built on Android; it offers a free trial of its now 400+ games; and, as a bonus, it costs just 99 dollars. The console also has a control panel for developers, so anyone can enjoy the adventure of making their own games; and if your game is good enough… then OUYA (via Kickstarter, of course) will finance it. The functionality is not limited to game-playing. Indeed, the company has forged partnerships to incorporate video- and music-streaming services and applications within its own offering. But will that be enough to take on the big boys Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo? Tough call – the gamers will decide.

UBUNTU

5 million euros in just 48 hours: that is the new record set by the fundraising campaign on Indiegogo (the worldwide alternative to Kickstarter) of Ubuntu Edge, the latest-generation mobile phone devised by Canonical, the company behind the famous Linux-based operating system. But even independents sometimes (often?) lose out. After raising 7 million euros in a single week, the campaign lost momentum and ground to a halt at 13 million, somewhat short of the financial target required to get the phone into production (32 million). One way or another, this story and its not-exactly-happy ending remind us how a product's fate is irrevocably bound up with the decisions of the customers and how strong their influence is becoming over companies' destinies.

The entire Automattic's network
automattic.com/about/

Kickstarter: OUYA was born this way
goo.gl/clCcJo

Ars Technica about Ubuntu Edge
goo.gl/e7ibh6

WECONOMY INSIGHT

INDIE-PENDENT!
THE DIY FROM NIRVANA TO
BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Gabriele Buzzi
Project & Community Manager
Logotel

For as long as I've been listening to music – forever, in other words – I have liked to listen to (and play) indie music, "indie" being American shorthand for "independent". This genre, in its current sense, emerged in the States in the late '70s in the form of punk-rock, self-produced and DIY music. It gained a foothold in the 1980s, with the advent and development of a network of small record companies, becoming firmly established in the '90s when indie bands gained commercial success. A classic example is Nirvana. After recording their first album for a small Seattle label in 1989, they signed for major label Geffen, and their second record, Nevermind in '91, sold 25 million copies. With Nirvana, indie culture took off, and the word became the umbrella term that we know today, even in the world of enterprise. But what does it mean to be indie? In general, it means positioning yourself outside the ethos of mass production and distribution. Specifically, it means having control of your work (as you have to "answer" directly to your audience/customer – i.e. your investor – without too many middlemen), balancing economic profit with personal satisfaction, choosing who you work with according to ethical criteria, and joining a network of people who "see things the way you do" and help you spread your product. But what has that got to do with the world of medium-sized and large companies, which in theory are outside the inherently "indie" start-up ecosystem? Well, at least two things. The first is structural: the advent of first the internet and then the social networks gave a massive boost to "independent" approaches. So much so that, as Chris Anderson's theory of the long tail teaches us, in the web era it is often more advantageous to be "niche" (or to work with a set of niches) than a mainstream "generalist". So have we "won" ("we" being the generation raised, following

our initial example, on bread and Nirvana)? In a sense, yes. But it is also true that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between what is indie and what is not, in this time of economic turbulence and transformation, when the large-scale retail trade is losing ground to self-productions, fundraising and localisms – agile, vigorous operations with ever-increasing influence. Independence, the ability to find the resources inside yourself for generating value, becomes the most experimental and yet "safest" way forward, because it is grounded in your own know-how. That's what my work as a community manager teaches me: enabling my users to do things themselves (the "DIY" approach), using tools designed to facilitate their professional independence, simplifies and adds value to the community itself. The second point is a personal one: bringing an indie-pendent attitude to your work is a virtue that many HR managers would do well to embrace. It means, among other things: thinking for yourself; catering to your customer's tastes without forgetting your own; knowing not only what is popular and what everyone wants now but also what will be the next big thing that people clamour for in six or twelve months' time;

selecting suppliers according to "ethical" (e.g. green) principles or values rather than purely financial reasons;

developing horizontal sharing approaches with colleagues while working and having fun together, too. Mutual support and esteem in a team are at least as important as hierarchies and role demarcation:

favour open source and the free movement of ideas; try as far as possible to cooperate systematically, to build a network with your clients and partners. There's no value like shared value. In a nutshell: do business with your head and… with your heart!

WECONOMY
SERVICE DESIGN **TOOLS**

FORCED CONNECTIONS WORKSHOP

WHAT

A "forced-connections" workshop is an ad hoc environment created to stimulate the design of new products/services in the most "indie" (and "auto") ways possible. That implies lighting a flame of experimentation – for a limited time, in a dedicated space, and to a very specific brief – and gathering people of tremendously diverse corporate roles, cultures and skills, especially independent designers, makers and "prototypers" who can give real form, in double-quick time, to the ideas that emerge.

WHY

"Forcing connections" between traditionally unconnected elements is a well-tested method of idea generation, especially where the goal is to add value through "disruptive" innovation. If the "forced" connections are between different people, even more so than between the potential sources of inspiration, then this added value grows exponentially, creating a kind of "temporary accelerator" at the heart of the business.

WHEN

- when you want to generate especially radical, highly innovative ideas;
- when you want to reduce as much as possible the lead times that, under "normal" conditions, would need to be planned for the decision, design and delivery stages;
- above all, when you have the licence to experiment independently on your own, maintaining high expectations but without being intimidated by the prospect of potential failure, treating it rather as an exciting tension as you move towards the "new".

HOW

72 hours (or rather, 3 working days) is the ideal duration for a workshop on this subject: 1 day to get oriented, to explain and agree the brief, and to begin brainstorming ideas; 1 day for full-on joint planning to get working at full throttle and to converge on what the final output will be; and 1 day to tweak, finalise and present the results.
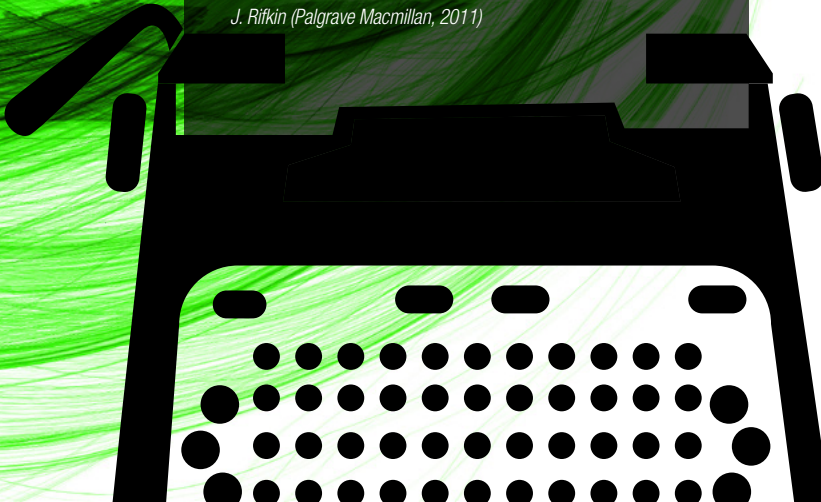
INTER
wiki

The "Inter" prefix (Latin for "among", "in the midst of" or "in relation to") is one of the most widely used in the business lexicon. According to Wikipedia, for example, INTERnational means "that which presupposes the involvement of, the interaction between, or the inclusion of more than one nation." But above all, the term "does not coincide with 'global'; that implies 'a single world' seen as one unit, while 'international' recognises the difference between the different places." In this sense, in the current context of the hyperdigitalisation of business – where being a multinational enterprise is increasingly about doing business in a few clicks – the concept of INTERnationalisation needs to be developed on more than one front: cultural enrichment (INTERculturalism) and multidisciplinary integration (INTERdisciplinary working). Eschewing a "Risk-style" economic colonialism, whose limits are now all plain to see, businesses today operate in new "businessscapes", not so much in relation to a starting or destination point but rather in a continual dialogue between different cultural, social and economic players, taking on board the views of the stakeholders involved and favouring a holistic system of elements that do not fall into the classic "global vs local" dichotomy. Beyond even INTERnational, then, is the collaborative enterprise an "INTERidentity" body?

BELIEVE IT

INTERNATIONALISATION:
A MATTER OF TRUST?
OLD CHALLENGES,
NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Paolo Nagari
CEO InterCultural Group

Until a few years ago, exploring and penetrating foreign markets demanded major resources: infrastructure, dedicated personnel, and massive capital. Internationalising was effectively the prerogative of companies with multi-million-dollar budgets. Things have changed. A company of any size can now become a global enterprise. But the ability to cross boundaries with your products and services, to spread the word and reach new international markets brings not just extraordinary new opportunities but also old challenges.

We often say at InterCultural Group that, to help businesses internationalise, you need to look at the big multinationals that have blazed the trail, to see what mistakes they made. Let's look at a few examples.

Leadership styles unsuited to global markets.
In the internationalisation process, companies tend to focus on areas like trading compliance and marketing at the expense of intercultural communication, which is actually essential for cross-border success. Statistically, one of the main problems facing global businesses is their inability to understand and adapt to the cultures of their overseas markets. As many as 10% of expatriate postings end prematurely because of a failure to relate effectively to the local culture; each time, it can cost the company up to 1.25 million dollars.

Discontented expatriate spouses.
This, the second principal cause of failed international appointments, is behind 17% of such cases. Discontent and resistance can surface in various ways, notably worries about the children's education and a perception that the family will struggle to adapt abroad. Of all the critical factors that an international appointment can entail, the family's difficulty in adjusting is the most important reason for expatriates' turning down such an opportunity.

Lack of national and ethnic diversity among managers.
This lesson comes directly from the large western multinationals, where the dearth of managers from different ethnic groups often tends to cause undesirable turnover among the more talented new recruits from different cultures. The motive is simple: why invest my time and effort in a company that does not offer career-development opportunities to people like me because of our "diversity"? And there is another incontrovertible reason for taking the trouble to invest in building a multinational workforce: it has been scientifically proven that multinational teams tend to achieve consistently better results than their monocultural counterparts and to produce more innovative and effective solutions.

When you need to work and communicate effectively with people from other cultures, the most important lesson is very simple: focus not on differences but on similarities, using them as a platform to build trust and good relationships.

MAKE IT

BIO-ON

Local, social, sustainable, public-spirited. "Economic colonialism" has a new vocabulary. It's not about conquering a territory any more but about sharing problems to find solutions together for the local community. Bio-on is a Bologna-based firm that is set to revolutionise the world of plastics at global level. Starting with agricultural wastes from sugar refineries, it uses bacterial fermentation of the sugars to make a plastic that is 100% biodegradable, eco-friendly and endowed with remarkable properties. And the company's revolutionary approach extends to its economic model of globalised industrial relocation, as it hands over the technology through zero-impact plants that the local producers then own. Think of it as a formula for "collaborative" local conquest: here is the problem (sugar-refinery processing waste); here is the solution (a system that turns the waste into plastic); here is the workforce (new jobs in the community); and here is the market (local demand consumes the production output).

Wired article about Bio-on
goo.gl/itxqd4

GROM

When we interviewed Guido Martinetti, co-founder of ice-cream chain Grom, in 2010 for the Weconomy blog, one thing he mentioned was the internationalisation approach that this established Italian success story was adopting. It is poles apart from the outdated "economic colonialism" paradigm. Instead, they take a careful, experimental approach to the raw materials, with meticulous selection of the ingredients, and a focus on the agricultural dimension. It adds up to an "obsession for excellence", as the company motto goes. These are the factors that have underpinned Grom's expansion policy: although they have opened sales outlets in American and Japan over the last 10 years, they have decided not to open as many others in potentially even more lucrative markets because, in the short term, those markets would not have enabled the brand to maintain its high reputation of "ice cream like it used to be". Internationalise, yes, but in moderation: Inter meets Local.

Guido Martinetti on Weconomy
youtube.com/watch?v=pxYzERP7HOE

MARRIOTT

Renaissance is the new portal from the Marriott Hotels chain that offers guests a complete guide to its city destinations, with a focus on luxury and lifestyle. The site showcases events, restaurants, shops and things to do in the city where you are staying. But, in essence, the project is about something else: cross-selling. Indeed, Renaissance promotes evenings, courses and dinners through partnerships with other local tourist facilities in the various cities. It is all about "hunting" the guests' needs. What's at stake? A superior-quality accommodation experience for the guest, and a win-win of new alliances with local businesses for Marriott. Is this the industry's riposte to the revolutionary Airbnb sharing model?

Renaissance Hotels portal
renaissance-hotels.marriott.com/

WECONOMY
INSIGHT

+ INTER, + DELIVERY
TOWARDS "RESPONSIVE" PROJECT
PLANNING
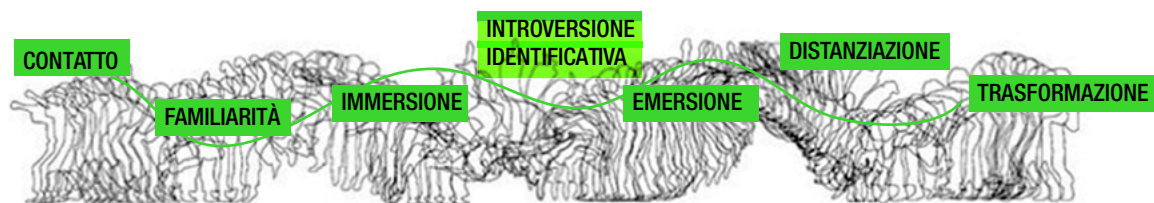
Tiziana Cardile
Design Senior Manager
Logotel

I have been a project manager for 10 years, but in the last one or two, I have increasingly found myself heading up innovation projects in an international, intercultural, interdisciplinary sphere. Why? Two trends are worth underlining. On one hand, brands that were international from the outset are choosing to focus ever sharper on markets outside Italy where, inevitably, greater opportunities seem up for grabs. On the other, Italian companies, including SMEs (even independent start-ups) are espying a chance to grow in the international market (especially the retail sector). The impact of these developments in our day-to-day project work lies, first of all, in the need to create a good mix between the different contexts – Italy and overseas – at the stage of forecasting trends, identifying best practices, etc. "Copy and paste", if it ever worked, is unlikely to now. For the market is so interdependent as to compromise in advance any possibility of "parachuting in" a business model, a format or a sales concept from A (abroad, usually) to B (Italy). Methods and tools, even well-established ones, from purely domestic contexts (in terms of assessing the state of the art, identifying opportunities, generating ideas, etc.) must therefore be reappraised and adjusted in light of the new and different mindsets that we have to deal with. A basic example: even a simple Skype conference can and must become an unmissable chance to convey the point of a project or idea to the clients, because the timescales and the more complex distances facing us in international settings deny us the "luxury" of "slower" methods of presentation or seeking buy-in (like a workshop). The narrative model changes, then: an offering must be planned in a storytelling context that is more direct, concrete and able to put across the added value of an idea to people whose approaches differ widely for reasons of extraction or culture (even in such nearby countries as France or Spain). In short: dealing with not one Marketing Manager but several, from different countries – who probably operate in multinational companies with different strategies and mind maps, too – is both a challenge and a highly enriching source of perspectives, feedback and creativity. So how can we retain focus on the Point, with a capital P, of an international project, without squashing (or, equally, being taken over by) the specifics of the individual cultures? I believe that "having to" conceive "in advance" how a project should really pan out in the field (or rather, fieldS – how will German customers react to it? What will the American customer make of it?) is actually a tremendous opportunity to shorten the delivery and completion timescales, by testing and customising them at the start of the design process. In sum, it means nailing a project that is inherently collaborative from the outset.

WECONOMY
SERVICE DESIGN **TOOLS**

STORYTELLING

CONTATTO
FAMILIARITÀ
IMMERSIONE
INTROVERSIONE IDENTIFICATIVA
EMERSIONE
DISTANZIAZIONE
TRASFORMAZIONE

WHAT

Content innovation (see Info) can prepare the ground for innovation in inter-relational dynamics, too. Infodesign apart, one example is the tool of storytelling. That is, how can we construct a narrative to generate meaningful content that will be listened to and that will capture its audience's selective attention, even in international or inter-cultural contexts?

WHY

Stories are, shall we say, "landscapes" belonging to both everyone and no one. So the open, flexible, invaluable tool of storytelling is well placed to foster joint planning and collaboration, especially when different mindsets (due to national origin, culture, or disciplinary background) are involved, between people we need to engage in a shared path forward.

WHEN

For when things, products and services tell us stories and engage us, they have the power to mobilise, to open us up to other stories, other narratives, to invite us to become part of new shared visions. The storytelling process and the associated standard narrative template are actually universal tools that can provide a recognisable, shared framework for the story we want to tell.

HOW

From Vladimir Propp's research onwards, the structure of the stories (in this case, products, services, brands, etc.) that we tell has been codified in various ways and in different sequences. In general, regardless of any cultural specificity, a story follows the doings of a hero who overcomes their fears to face a conflict/challenge against an enemy to win the desired "treasure", aided by helpers and "magic objects", and celebrates the happy ending. By applying this template to a real intercultural project, we can help those involved to focus on strengths and weaknesses and to devise appropriate solutions.

PRESENT STORIES

INTER, GLOBAL, SOCIAL
THE ONLY WINNING INNOVATION IS
SHARED INNOVATION

Alberto Ceccarelli
Global Innovation Director
Autogrill

In an international group like the one where I work – a group, moreover, in transition from an industrial to a service model – there are strands of innovation that cut across the entire group and other strands that can be delegated to individual local units, strands that have no impact on the company's overall "storyline" but that entail operational improvements. I believe, above all, in always starting with the "first type" of innovation, to generate a shared alignment within the organisation. In this "global" kind of innovation, I include all those problems and solutions that concern commercial effectiveness and organic growth rather than cost efficiencies and process reviews, important though they are. What do I mean by that? I mean looking at the customer not as a number that visits my sales outlet just because "I am there" but rather as a person with specific attitudes, consumption profiles, and a readiness to establish a relationship with the company that goes well beyond merely going to the till for a quick transaction. This entails making a leap not only culturally (not that that is without its challenges) but also systemically: i.e. taking experiences that are now mature in some sectors (services) and applying them to another industry. As they say, steal with pride (and not without courage) when you find solutions in other arenas. This is a strand of internationalisation par excellence, an attitude that ought to permeate a business right through: addressing the market with a clear positioning concept in terms of mission, values and brand equity, and then nurturing commercial approaches that put these statements into practice. Having done that, being customer-centric essentially means establishing an open interrelationship with customers, a kind of "handshake" to exchange daily, even in the social-network arena. What are the risks of such an "inter-" approach to innovation? I see two kinds. The first is failing to be consistent: making statements of commercial intent without properly delivering on them. If you generate 100 horsepower in the test harness, then you have to deliver at least 99; therefore, you need a distribution network that you can count on to actually get what you designed to market. The second risk is failing to explain the initiative within the company, failing to generate enough energy, visibility and motivation around it, not emphasising to people at all levels the importance of what is being done. Taking things to an extreme, you could say that strategies are not right or wrong a priori; a strategy is right (effective) if it successfully engages all the players in the company and gets them pulling in the same direction. Overall success is a combination of many details and small attitudes, and the most tangible added value is not so much in the breakthrough idea in itself for its own sake but rather in the right implementation of an idea that EVERYONE buys into as part of a shared effort. If the "outside" world is social, then the world "inside" cannot but be, too. And if the outside provides a shared yardstick as to what is right or wrong, then the same principle must apply also within the business. I believe that this rediscovery of the human being in terms of HR management can become a kind of marketing lever; I also believe that "inter-" approaches now offer the only chance to uncover the (many) talents that may simply never have been stimulated in the right way.

FUTURE STORIES

MESSAGE IS THE MESSAGE
DEAR MCLUHAN:
THE MEDIUM HAS HAD ITS DAY

Thomas Bialas
Futurist

And this, too, a certain idea about the world (of business), ends up in the bin. We have all grown up, professionally, believing in the clear diktat of the global village. In "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man", one of McLuhan's most important works, the Canadian sociologist switched the emphasis from the content to the medium. The famous saying "the medium is the message", in fact, summed up this theory in a nutshell: the mass media (and also the channels) are not neutral but have an influence on the message's recipients, an influence that goes beyond the specific content that they convey. Media and channels could impose any content (albeit rarely) and non-content (frequently). The owner of the means justified every end. I am using the past tense, because this is in the past now. Fordism, mass production, mass consumption, mass communication – it's all over. The repetitive flow of standardised products (and media and channels, too) has reached crisis point. What's more: no content, no party. Or, if you prefer, "The message is the message." In the post-Gutenberg era, the mass communication channels lose importance. The medium is no longer the message. Content and its quality are reasserting themselves. It's about having a story to tell and telling it. Concentrating on meaning and value. In future, we will gather (albeit virtually) in a circle around a fire once more to tell and listen to stories. Beware, though, that there are too many of us around the flames. In the digital era, everyone has access to the medium (the internet), and everyone can tell stories. Clearly, power is changing hands, and now even big business must refocus firmly on content, given that nowadays: *1)* The message is coming home. Or rather, history is returning to its origins and designated settings: the street (real or virtual) where the great storyteller spins great yarns, in person. *2)* The message is prolific. Each message can spawn many others. They proliferate at an astounding rate. Thanks to the internet, in power (and perspective, plausibly), every human is a medium. Making yourself heard is becoming harder. *3)* The message is cheap or deep. We are standing at a Y-junction. Which at least makes the choice easier, as we have to pick one or the other. Either price or value. Either ape the Chinese (badly) or be true to our Italianness (finally), by creating and amazing. *4)* The message is debate. Content must be discussed, not communicated. Pros and cons: yes, exactly that – you need to apply the transparency of strengths and weaknesses to your product or service, too. *5)* The message is here and now. That's not Zen theory; today, simply, everything is "wow now". For the new generations, what does not happen now (in the immediate present and in real time) does not exist. Digital technologies have accelerated this perception process (along with just-in-time consumption opportunities). The present expands and steals space from past and future. For those who don't look past the end of their own nose, service and product (and content) offerings must be extremely immediate. Think of Google Glass, the perfect metaphor of wow now. *6)* The message is new. Because of message proliferation, we assimilate only new, original and unexpected messages. The key concept is no longer attention economy (gaining attention) but interesting economy (making yourself interesting). *7)* The message is story. But story is no longer enough. If everybody masters the rhetoric of storytelling to promote and position products and services, then the subtle distinction is in the truth (see below). *8)* The message is "authentity" (authentic identity). The authentic, genuine, true, even raw, message breaks through in an epoch dominated by amateur, transparent content (verifiable at any moment). *9)* The message is human. As gossip has always shown, people are interested in other people's stories. The internet has amplified this tendency, and businesses must learn to humanise their stories.

FINAL LAP

WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?
RENEWING OUR ROLES

Nicola Favini
DG & Manager of Communities
Logotel

The future is made of oxymorons, opposing concepts that must, however, be embraced and balanced. The context – us – is changing and transforming. Things that worked yesterday don't work any more; things that have not worked for years are now useful again. We need to be able to integrate push models with pull models; we need to create volume and value together; we cannot have "selling" without "serving". Every day, the manager-maker seeks balance points to build on. Progress comes from a mixer where a business is constantly seeking its own rhythm. A company must find its own balance, in turn, between being an organisation and being an organism, between being a collection of individual workspaces and a system of living cells. Another balance point must be found between being weconomy and being "indie". By "indie", I mean the ability to construct, unleash and reinforce the inherent power within our business. A business is an indie place if it can build itself from inside the new roles that it needs in order to create coherence with the external environment. What are the new roles? We're spoilt for choice. There are conceptual roles like the community manager for segments of the customer base, who talks to them every day across all channels, who represents them at business and after-sales forums. There are method roles like the service designer, who welcomes interdepartmental (and thus multidisciplinary) teams to his/her hangar and facilitates processes of idea generation and innovation. Then there are ancillary roles, or missions, that everyone can learn. In a company, we are all people, customers, mums and dads. The other day, I attended an event where professionals and managers from the same company had gathered to share insights and observations made the week before, from their own perspective and as customers in other contexts, in their free time. 20 people with over 10 documented insights each created a "research project" of over 200 documents (photos, videos, collected brochures …) as the starting point for innovating the process of welcoming customers in store – a "consultancy-free" (in-house) project. Another new role: market-watcher. Indie does not conflict with weconomy. Weconomy fosters partnerships and alliances for particular purposes between individuals and collectives. The challenge for manager-makers is to uncover talents, to discover skills that refresh the "know-how" in their system. How many new roles have you invented this past year? How may people have rediscovered their spark through a new role? Your company's uniqueness will spring from the uniqueness of the roles that constitute it. But be careful; it's not just about a revamp! To make an old role new, it's not enough just to change the title. That's just a waste of time and credibility, inside and outside. What relationship can we build, then, between Indie and weconomy?

MAGAZINE CONTINUES HERE

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF MAKING WECONOMY:

LOCAL SPECIAL

LAM BRA TE

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

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