When Dynamic Markets meet Skeletons: A Biomimetic Exploration of Executive Education’s Shells and Skills

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Lonesome George died of “old age” on June 24, 2012.
When Markets meet Skeletons

• Intro – Biomimetics: A method to consider

• Dynamic and Archetypical Structures
  – Markets` structures: players and rules
  – Organizational structures: units and culture

• Cases
  – Empires
  – Corporations

• Conclusion
Executive education`s end?

• Challenging globalization
• Specter of substitution
• The digital abyss
The end of executive education as it is known

- Increasing need for executive education, enabling technology and an increasing pool of partners
- New rules, new players and new strategies for executive education

Resign ourselves to a fate of disruption or rise to the opportunity?

➡️ Rethinking executive education in dynamic markets.
Biomimetics: A method to consider

- Analogical thinking
- Learning from nature`s lessons
- Copying systems from nature
- Exploring the models of nature
- Leveraging the “wisdom” of evolution

Examples:
- Boxfishes for streamlined cars.
- Lizards lead in water capture.
- Burs sparked Velcro.
- The Lotus Effect
- Insects` flutter helps micro-robots fly.
Applying nature`s practices and comparing them with those of your own institutions promises insights on

- Structure
- Support
- Skills
Dynamic Markets: Players and Rules of EE are changing

• Different kinds of players, tools and strategies meet
  – Novel players
  – New tools
  – New business models

• Different kinds of games and rules
  – New games
  – New rules
  – New business models

⇒ Structures, support and skills are needed to adapt to change
Which structures, support and skills did nature develop?
Endo

- Support body weight
- Provide Framework
- Make Blood Cells
- Muscles attach for movement
- Protect vital organs
- Contains Living Cells
- Inside the body
Nature has different solutions to provide structure and protection: Skeletons

- An analogy for organizational structure and support

- Skeleton is “any firm structure that provides support to the body and protection to the softer parts of the organism.”
  (Kent, Advanced Biology)

- Cytoskeleton are the support in single cells.

- Multicellular animals have an:
  - Hydrostatic skeleton (support with water)
  - Exoskeleton (dead support outside the body)
  - Endoskeleton (living support from the inside)
Hydro

- consists of fluid-filled bodies
- surrounding muscles regulate the pressure of the fluid
- change an organism's shape
- movements such as burrowing, swimming or preying
Exo

- Outside Shell (Covering)
- Hard
- Water-proof
- Non-living
- Shed for growth
- Protects body from drying out and injury
- Muscles attach for movement
Skeletons` (Dis)advantages

• Hydrostatic skeleton (support with water)
  flexible but weak protection (pins!) and hostage to gravity

• Exoskeleton (dead support outside the body)
  good protection but restrictive to growth (dead and heavy armor) need to moult

• Endoskeleton (living support from the inside)
  resists gravity but is rigid and amenable to lifestyle changes, less protection for soft parts
When Dynamic Markets meet EE: Shell or Skills

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Empires and Governance

• The Ottoman`s support, protection and skills provided by

  – Independent experts nurtured fit for purpose

  – Meritocracy

  – One generation aristocracy
CAN GE GET ITS JUICE BACK?

A company renowned for innovation and talent development has lost its way. Inside Jeff Immelt’s quest to find the light.
Support, Protection and Skills for Adaptation

• When dynamic markets meet skeletons (Shells or Support) they extinguish, tolerate or nudge towards adaptation

• Creating capabilities (or tacit knowledge) to adapt to the market dynamics are key.

• What are the skills that help survive?
Learn, Break and Create

• Creative Routines (Nonaka and Reinmoeller)

• Learning
  Sense and see change as is; understand emergent best practices
  (unfortunately many organisations remain focused on the status quo)

• Breaking
  Exercise judgment in breaking with the shells of the past
  (unfortunately many remain prisoner of their past)

• Creating
  Incentivize and explore by experiments to generate breakthrough business models
  (unfortunately many do not dare to leap to new optima)
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