Building blocks of success

Innovation can be a powerful accelerator for the future prospects of a business, even an entire economy. Now new research from the University’s Faculty of Business and Economics has identified the key components of innovation within organisations. By Eoin Hahessy.

Innovation is a much sought-after ingredient by companies in all sectors and policy makers in every economy. There’s the power to catapult a company to become a leader amongst its competitors and ignite a country to become an economic powerhouse.

Forward thinking policy-makers across the globe actively try to create the conditions that will allow innovation to flourish, and certain companies innately fine tune their internal processes to ensure they can engender innovation. The rewards of tapping the potential of innovation can be significant.

Apple, the poster child of innovation, has spearheaded innovation in the field of consumer electronics and has contributed significantly to the US economy. Toyota, through the development of its Hybrid Synergy Drive technology, has become a world leader in hybrid cars, and companies such as Google, Facebook and Twitter have all drawn from the benefits of innovation.

Neglecting innovation within a company can be fatal and many once-forming strong market leaders can be schedule. Just ask Kodak. There are numerous stories relating to companies that were once at the forefront of innovation in their industry but which now litter the corporate graveyard, replaced by companies with faster, simpler and better technology.

In fact, not just companies, but whole industries - such as those involved in producing typewriters, instant cameras, and cassette tapes - have come and gone in the last century.

The idea that innovation both creates and destroys, which the economist Joseph Schumpeter so eloquently characterized as ‘the gale of creative destruction’, is a very powerful insight. It hints at the fact that innovation makes our life better by producing cheaper and more convenient products, but that it also comes at a cost since some workers are left behind and companies go bankrupt as a part of the industrial evolutionary process.

According to Associate Professor Paul Jensen, an industrial economist specialising in innovation economics at the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, the causes and effects of innovation are complex.

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Using museums to combat racism

With racism continuing to pose significant challenges for young Australians, a group of Melbourne researchers is working with Museum Victoria to shed light on the problem and increase understanding of diversity in schools. By Gabrielle Murphy.

Diversity

“Yin Paradies’ cultural background is as diverse as his research is,” Trui D’Aubigne, Professor and Dean of Science at the University of Melbourne.

Coming to Melbourne from Darwin about 15 years ago, Dr Paradies, who identifies as Aboriginal-Anglo-Australian, chose Melbourne as the place to further his studies in mathematics, computing, statistical and humanekenetics. His current research focus is on the health effects of racism and anti-racism theory, policy and practice.

“Racism is a persistent problem with serious but poorly understood consequences for both affected individuals and society,” Dr Paradies says.

About a quarter of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and one-third of proportion of Indigenous Australians, have experienced racism in the workplace or have evidence to suggest experiences of racism in their lives.

Now working out of the Melbourne School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne, Dr Paradies is the recipient of a series of grants and awards and is the prestigious Fulbright Scholar.

He is one of the doctoral graduates from an university-wide collaboration that awarded inaugural McIntosh Fellowships from the university to fund the development of the institution’s research into racism and build his innovative research and lead multidisciplinary research networks and research activities within and across faculties. Last year he was one of the winners of a UNTL young Indigenous researcher of the year.

Dr Paradies works on the health effects of racism and anti-racism theory, policy and practice. His research focuses on the relationship between racism and health outcomes. He is also a renowned teacher and mentor, and has a strong commitment to diversity in education.

The University of Melbourne has undertaken a raft of new initiatives for how we manage waste, from new rubbish bins for mixed recycling, and a preference for renewable fuels and geothermal energy to work on ‘green roofs’ which support planted vegetation.

The Office for Environmental Program's flagship degree, the Master of Sustainability, is distributed provided for in the Copyright Act 1968.

The range of subjects and the breadth of the curriculum allow students to develop an understanding of the interrelationships between social, environmental and economic systems and to identify and address sustainability issues and challenges. Students work with the campus sustainability centre, which includes new space for the Office for Sustainability and the Jeanette McLean Centre for Environmental Studies at the University of Melbourne, and is part of a shared agenda at Melbourne reflecting the importance of sustainability action and thinking.

The Campus Sustainability Centre showcases research projects around sustainability, climate change and the environment in a more broadly, from experiments with algae fuel and geothermal energy to work on ‘green roofs’ which support planted vegetation.

According to Dr Paradies, racism occurs in over 70 per cent of secondary schools, and presents a significant issue for students and teachers alike.

“Racist behaviour at school, which is not uncommon, is one of the biggest barriers to achieving diversity. It can be a form of bullying or harassment, and it can affect the learning environment of students who experience it. It can also be a form of discrimination, where people from non-English speaking backgrounds are treated differently than other students. It can also be a form of racism, where people from non-English speaking backgrounds are excluded from certain activities or opportunities.”

The ARC linkage project will explore how high school students and their teachers understand racism, diversity and identity and determine how museums and cultural institutions can be used to address these issues.

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The project team includes Dr Paradies’ former colleague, Naomi Priest (a specialist in child public health), and the Melbourne Museum’s Senior Curator of Science, Christopher Kelleher (a specialist in health policy, programs and evaluation), and the Melbourne Museum’s Senior Curator of Social and Cultural Studies, Dr Alexia Mihaljevic.

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Capitalism - the mother of green invention?

The carbon tax will be implemented in July but a University of Melbourne research indicates low carbon transformation will require a culture of innovation driven by the competition inherent in capitalism. Nerissa Hamrick reports.

Looking around our homes and offices, there have been some great inventions to reduce the amount of power we use. The low energy lightbulb is a prime example.

While helpful, the lightbulb, and indeed all low carbon technologies, is not a signal, but the support and structure that encourages innovation and transformation. New clean technologies can be scaled up using competitions and profits in capitalism, but they need policy and societal value to allow them to become a reality.

The trick is to act immediately, and design early management actions as experiments to be both an experiment aimed at learning by doing,” says Dr Michael Bode, an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Melbourne who is conducting targeted research into the species "Leipoa ocellata".

Dr Bode found that the species breeding "like-толики on continent. The lightbulb is being followed by the use of capitalism in the low carbon transformation process. "As a threatened arid species, malleefowl are also likely to affect other agricultural and terrestrial practices and systems," says Dr Bode.

The research team, which is being led by Dr Bode and funded by the Victorian Government’s "Adaptive Management of arid and semi-arid zones." The trick is to act immediately, and design early management actions as experiments.”

Malleefowl are a classic example of a species on which to develop and test what we refer to as knowledge of the best action is gained. "We need to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships with leading industry consultants, government agencies, and well-organised volunteer networks, and test this knowledge in the laboratory and government-business-society-relationships relationships.

Dr Bode leads the "Carbon team of Melbourne’s FRM research institute which was one of the 19 winners of a $1.1 million investment in business and industry bids to develop new and innovative water management and conservation of the species. The Project conducted systems-scale experiments were conducted at the University of Melbourne’s Milling Dam, Cookie, and on the tourists in the long-term ecological health of Australia’s rivers. Automatic control can reduce flow rates and variations in flow rates, and in turn increase slackwater habitat if this objective is built into the system,” says Professor Western.

"Slackwater environments are stretches of water in our channels with little or no current and are significant biodiversity hotspots, essential to the long-term ecological health of Australia’s rivers. Automatic control can reduce flow rates and variations in flow rates, and in turn increase slackwater habitat if this objective is built into the system," says Professor Western. In addition to helping maintain more appropriate ecological conditions, the system enables water authorities to decide whether the release volume or the ordering times (or both) should be reduced, strengthening flexibility in how rivers are managed.

"Under current practice, irrigation need to order water four to six days in advance depending on the operational priorities set, automatic control systems can deliver more flexibility for less as one or two days," says Professor Western.

To characterise part benefits for the environment and agricultural and support water use decisions, FRM developed an analysis framework to inform water resource sharing between the agricultural and environmental sectors. Professor Ben Garvin of the Marayong-Farming-Research Centre says data collection and measurement of species populations, together with demographic modelling, could become a useful tool to inform on environmental water planning.

"The understanding of ecological consequences brings us great potential to improve slackwater habitat, conserve wetland ecosystems, and support flood-dependent habitats,” he says.

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The persistence of very high unemployment in the 1930s was a clear affront to the mistakes theory. It is implausible that so many people could be mistaken for such a long period of time," he says. Instead, Professor McDonald thought that rigidity in wages was a more likely explanation for the large increases in unemployment that had happened in the 1930s. His research taking the approach soon developed into a collaboration with Australian economist, Professor Robert Solow. Together they wrote a paper that has gone on to become the most cited social science paper in the history of the University of Melbourne. This paper “Wage bargaining and employment” was published in the American Economic Review in 1961. It has been cited 453 times and reprinted in seven different volumes of collected papers on economics.

"They show how wage rigidity can happen through the process of bargaining by a trade union and a firm, which have to make huge commitments to the wages. If the firm has a huge commitment to pay wages, it cannot fire workers. This is why there is “rational trap,”" he says. "The problem of persistent unemployment was not the answer for general unemployment and the rigidity of wages, and so many people are having and decreases in aggregate demand will then translate into the rigidity in the rate of unemployment.

In my view, the “mistakes” theory of unemployment should be combined with the reality of high unemployment in the work force. One of the big challenges is the persistence of very high unemployment in the 1930s, which leads to the “mistakes” theory. It is implausible that so many people could be mistaken for such a long period of time.

In March 2010, a defining moment in Australia and China’s growing business relationship, was marked by a visit of former Premier Xi Jinping to Australia. The weeklong visit has since became the talk of the town. The economic relationship between Australia and China has been growing at an impressive pace. Yet, how is this trust earned or lost?

During the visit, Mr. Xi and Prime Minister Tony Abbott reached a wide range of agreements, setting a new benchmark in the economic relationship between the two countries. The visit was hailed as a historic milestone in the bilateral relationship. A joint statement was signed that aimed to further strengthen economic and trade ties between the two countries. The statement emphasized the importance of trade and investment cooperation, as well as the commitment to enhancing economic integration and fostering innovative partnerships.

The visit also marked the signing of a number of agreements, including a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of a China-Australia Business Council. This council would serve as a platform for business leaders to discuss issues and opportunities for cooperation. The memorandum also included provisions for the promotion of cultural exchanges and the enhancement of people-to-people relations.

In addition, both countries committed to the establishment of a China-Australia Business Council, which would work to promote trade and investment cooperation. The council would serve as a platform for business leaders to discuss issues and opportunities for cooperation.

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Understanding child health in same-sex families

Katherine Smith speaks with Simon Crouch about a study on the health and wellbeing of children raised in same-sex attracted families.

Q: What exactly is your study aimed at? Finding out A. The Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families aims for the first time to determine the complete physical, mental and social wellbeing of Australian children with at least one same-sex attracted parent, and to identify factors that may be associated with child health and wellbeing in this setting.

Q: Do we know how many children in Australia are being raised with parents of the same gender? A. Our research includes any parent who identifies as same-sex attracted. That will include gay or lesbian couples; single same-sex attracted parents; bisexual and transgender parents and grandparents. The closest we can get to numbers on the number of same-sex families is data from the 2006 Census. Information was collected about households where two adults lived together, of which one was in a de facto relationship. When these households included children, the census did not distinguish between same-sex or opposite-sex families. This gross underestimate, that excludes single parents and families who choose to remain silent about their sexual status for whatever reason, suggested 3,200,000 children in same-sex families.

Q: In most cases, is one of the parents generally related to the child or children? What are some other scenarios in which same-sex parents ‘make family’? A. Children born into same-sex families can be formed in a variety of ways. There are still a few children being born into single parents where they have an heterosexual relationship that subsequently breaks down as a parent (or occasionally both) discuss a same-sex attraction. This is becoming much less common, but some same-sex couples or single gay or lesbian people are forming families through adoption or through surrogates. Other children may not have a formative arrangement. With advancing technology, children in same-sex couples may be conceived using assisted reproductive technologies. In those instances, the patient may have access to better treatment options than young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Q: There are studies that research the benefits of marrying in same-stable relationships and a secure environment for raising children. At present these benefits are not afforded to same-sex couples and their children may suffer because of it. Moving beyond issues of relationship stability, it can be argued that the perceived stigma experienced by same-sex families due to the legislated discrimination of the Marriage Act is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of children in same-sex families. Research suggests that when same-sex families experience stigma and discrimination their children may not perform as well on measures of psychosocial wellbeing. In terms of physical health of the child, we do have to expect to see emerging during your lifetime.

University of Melbourne undergraduates are bringing languages to life for school students.

Chattering with children about their parents’ language choices can become a difficult conversation. To help ease the discussion, the University of Melbourne’s Melbourne Language Assistants program is helping to bring languages to life for school students.

How and when teaching languages should be done in the classroom, and how they are taught to children, they could differ. The first cohort of twenty students in this project completed a survey that enabled us to identify areas that might be described as more socially progressive. A. If we generally find multi-parents and families that have same experiences to each other. This is a subject that does not cause confusion. It would be a fairly easy way for gay male parents as well as women who are unable to conceive. I would always advise gay fathers engaged in surrogacy to explore the option of sperm or egg donation. A gay father who wanted to explore in vitro fertilization should discuss this with their family doctor and ensure appropriate health screening before considering.

Q: What sorts of experiences do same-sex parents have interacting with their local health centres and ‘mother’ groups? A. As a gay father myself I own experiences with maternal and child health services and the mothers’ group have all been positive. It can be a little frustrating when there is a lack of recognition given to fathers who take a primary-care role. Our ‘mothers’ group’ had a heterosexual father and a gay father, but they all mothers. Now as mentioned above research shows that these mothers child might not perform as well on measures of psychosocial wellbeing. In terms of physical health of the child, we do have to expect to see emerging during your lifetime.
A new discovery into a treatment hope for muscular dystrophy

A portrait of Derek Denton, eminent Australian scientist and founder of the Howard Florey Institute at the University of Melbourne, has been exhibited as part of the Royal Society of Edinburgh’s 200th Anniversary celebrations. By Elizza Belmanna.

A portrait of the University of Melbourne’s Emeritus Professor Derek Denton – painted by Archibald Prize winning artist John Gourley – has been included in an exhibition to mark the 350th Anniversary of the Royal Society.

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May musicals at the residential colleges

Kit Stewart previews musical theatre productions by students from the University’s residential colleges.

FOOTNOTE

Jenny M Thomas’ admission to peers and other musicians that she was currently playing, and exploring the form of, Australian folk songs, was initially contrasted with some scepticism – or even slightly appalled – looks.

“I was so touched when people came to me after shows with tears in their eyes, saying how much the songs had moved them,” Ms Thomas says. “It’s a very special thing, and one of the most rewarding things about writing and performing folk songs.”

Some folk songs, for example, have a very long and often arduous history. Others are the stories of colonial Australian women who tell their stories on long journeys, of disease, suffering in the bush, and which have become the stepping stone to Bush Gothic. It’s a very proud moment to conduct this year’s ANZAC Day Dawn Service and Commemoration at the Shrine of Remembrance, and this month will see the Melbourne Choral Society celebrating Andrew Wallis’ 20th year as conductor of the choir. Ms Thomas will perform on Percy Grainger’s ‘Happy Valley’.

We are fortunate to have many strong ties to other musical organisations in Melbourne, so we can combine forces with the likes of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonia, for some of our concerts,” Ms Wallis says. “This latest recording has a much more up-tempo feel, and we have managed to incorporate a lot of energy and power, which perfectly suits a large choir like MUCS, so the sound feels bigger than ever, and good as it has ever been right now, with more than 200 active members.”

“Conducting on the University of Melbourne campus is always so lovely to see our members and the wonderful music, making great friends and getting so much out of performing, learning wonderful music, making great friends and hearing that our concerts have had a great impact on audiences,” she says.

The Melbourne University Choral Society is celebrating Andrew Wallis’ 20th year as conductor with a program of performances including Haydn’s The Creation.

By Zoe Nikakis.

Exploring the dark side of Australian folk music

Katherine Smith spoke with VCA alumna Jenny M Thomas about her musical life and latest recording, Bush Gothic.

FOOTNOTE

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By Zoe Nikakis.
A recent University of Melbourne graduate has secured a prestigious book deal through Penguin Books Australia after penning a series of children’s books that deals with the experience of children in war zones.

Lyn White spent more than 20 years as a primary school teacher and librarian in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs, but has long dreamt of becoming a children’s author. She used long service leave in 2010 to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts (Editing and Communication) at the University of Melbourne.

"I really wanted to do something different, and I have a real passion for children’s books," Ms White says.

While geothermal energy does not generate or replace electricity, it can be used to heat buildings. By anchoring pipes in the ground, heat from natural underground sources can be harnessed to provide free or low-cost heating and cooling. Geothermal energy systems are also environmentally sustainable, with no emissions from combustion.

"We have been working on this project for some time, but we are now ready to move forward," Professor Johnston says. "We are excited to be able to work with such a dedicated and enthusiastic team of researchers and industry partners."
PHOTO: MUSport

SPORTING SCHOLARS

Rovers, skiers and swimmers dominate scholarships. By Rod Warnecke.

The University of Melbourne’s annual sports scholarships are its most competitive offers, several of whom are seasoned Olympians. The scholarships provide assistance for athletes to train and receive coaching and physiotherapy at the University’s sports facilities, and also support athletes to attend high level competitions in their sport.

Beijing Olympic silver medallists James Malburg (Kat), and Cameron McKenna-McCall (Men’s) are amongst the 19 High Performance Scholarships announced by the University for 2012.

Malburg and McKenna-McCall join MU Boat Club and Australian rowers Josh Booth (Science), Tom Larkins (Law), Marburg (Law) and Cameron McKenzie-Clark (Science) as part of the Australian Olympic program. Melanie Mitchell (Arts) and Cameron McKenna-McCall (Men’s) are amongst the 19 High Performance Scholarships announced by the University for 2012.

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MELBOURNE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

- Monday Lunch Hour Concerts at MCM
- MCM Wind Symphony and String Ensemble

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

EXHIBITIONS
- Margaret Olley Gallery
- 40 Dodd Street, Southbank
- Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 12.00pm - 5.00pm
- Admission: Free

Performances of various ensembles and orchestras

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Events

May Timetable

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