

From Creativity to Innovation: Tracking Rejected Ideas

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Abstract : Innovative ideas are not always synonymous with business opportunities. Any idea can be creative and not recognized as a potential project in which money and time will be invested, among other resources. Even in firms that promote and enhance innovation, there are two 'check-points', the first corresponding to the acknowledgment of the idea as creative and the second, its consideration as a business opportunity. Both the recognition of new business opportunities or new ideas involve cognitive and psychological frameworks which provide individuals with a basis for noticing connections between seemingly independent events or trends as if they were 'connecting the dots'. It also involves prototypes-representing the most typical member of a certain category-functioning as 'templates' for this recognition. There is a general assumption that these kinds of evaluation processes develop through experience, explaining why expertise plays a central role in this process: the more experienced a professional, the easier for him (her) to identify new opportunities in business. But, paradoxically, an increase in expertise can lead to the inflexibility of thought due to automation of procedures. And, besides this, other cognitive biases can also be present, because new ideas or business opportunities generally depend on heuristics, rather than on established algorithms. The paper presents a literature review about the Einstellung effect by tracking famous cases of rejected ideas, extracted from historical records. It also presents the results of empirical research, with data upon rejected ideas gathered from two different environments: projects rejected during first semester of 2017 at a large incubator center in Sao Paulo and ideas proposed by employees that were rejected by a well-known business company, at its Brazilian headquarter. There is an implicit assumption that Einstellung effect tends to be more and more present in contemporaneity, due to time pressure upon decision-making and idea generation process. The analysis discusses desirability, viability, and feasibility as elements that affect decision-making.

Keywords : cognitive biases, Einstellung effect, recognition of business opportunities, rejected ideas

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